WOMEN IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

T. B. ALLWORTHY

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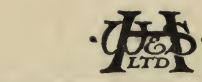

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WOMEN IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE EVIDENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR THE PROMINENCE OF WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

BY

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TO

MY MOTHER

AND

MY WIFE'S MOTHER.

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PREFACE.

The prominent part played by women in the primitive Christian communities has not been overlooked by commentators on the New Testament or by writers of works on the apostolic age. But the subject cannot be said to have received the attention which its interest and importance demand. There would seem to be no book, at least in English, in which a connected and critical account of the evidence may be found. Imperfect as I feel my work to be, the present essay is an attempt to supply this need.

Among the authorities cited in the footnotes, I must specially acknowledge my obligations to the following well-known works: Dr. Plummer's edition of St. Luke's Gospel in the *International Critical Commentary*, and in the same *Commentary*, the First Epistle to the Corinthians by Bishop Robertson and Dr. Plummer; the commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles by Dr. Knowling, in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*, and by Mr. Rackham, in the *Westminster Commentaries;* Sir William Ramsay's *The Church in the Roman Empire before* A.D. 170 and *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*; the *Dictionary of the Bible* and the *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* (Vol I.), edited by Dr. Hastings. I should add that I have used to some extent my own article on Phoebe in Vol II. of the last named *Dictionary*,

which has not yet been published. I am indebted also to Dr. Adeney's book entitled *The Women of the New Testament* and to Dr. James Donaldson's study of *Woman: Her Position and Influence in Ancient Greece and Rome, and among the Early Christians. Der Dienst der Frau in den ersten Jahrhunderten der Christlichen Kirche,* by L. Zscharnack, has been consulted.

In the revision of the proof-sheets I have had the valuable assistance of my sister-in-law, Miss Margaret Taylor, M.A., Lecturer in Classics at the Royal Holloway College, and of the Rev. A. V. Valentine-Richards, M.A., Fellow and Dean of Christ's College, Cambridge. I am most grateful to both for criticisms and suggestions.

T. B. A.

Cambridge,
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WOMEN IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

I.

It is the purpose of the following pages to consider the evidence, direct and indirect, which has been preserved in the New Testament regarding the position and influence of Christian women in the earliest days of the Church.

We must begin our study by recalling the revolutionary attitude to women adopted by our Lord.

It may be said at once that in social life Jewish women in the time of Christ enjoyed considerable freedom. Wives and mothers as such received the honour assigned to them in the Old Testament; and the position of the sex as a whole compares very favourably with that sanctioned by later Judaism. But there was little recognition of the mental and spiritual capacities of women.

Education was not for women. The merest smattering of religious knowledge sufficed for girls. The command to teach the Law to the children was interpreted as referring only to boys. Such rabbinical maxims as those attributed to Eliezer in the second century may not have been formulated as yet; but there can be little doubt that the scribes contemporary with our Lord would have endorsed the opinion of this teacher that it were better to commit the sacred

Deut. iv. 9

words to the flames than to impart them to a woman.[1] Certainly no rabbi would have numbered a woman among his disciples. No rabbi, indeed, was supposed to be seen speaking to a woman; hence the astonishment when Jesus was discovered in conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well. The prevailing idea of a woman's duty may be summed up as follows: she was to marry early, bear children, attend to her home, and set her husband free to devote himself to religious study and practices which it was hoped would avail also for his wife. In Dr. Schechter's words, 'the majority of women were entirely dependent on man, and became in religious matters a sort of appendix to their husbands, who by their good actions insured salvation also for them, and sometimes the reverse.'[2]

Jn. iv. 27

It was in this respect that our Lord's attitude to women must have been unintelligible to the men of His time. For, unlike the Jewish teachers, He recognized no distinction in spiritual things between the sexes. The personality of women was to Him of the same value as that of men; and He regarded it as equally capable of training and development.

There is an interesting addition in Marcion's 'Gospel' to the indictment of Jesus laid before Pilate by the Sanhedrim. According to this 'Gospel' our Lord was accused of 'leading

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1 For refs. in Talmud see art. 'Eliezer Ben Hyrcanus,' *Jewish Encyclopædia.*

2 *Studies in Judaism*, i. 388.

astray the women and children.'[1] It is perhaps unlikely that this charge was formally advanced by the authorities. It was not one to which the governor could be expected to pay much attention. A similar accusation had been made against Marcion himself; and Dr. Rendel Harris thinks that this fact is sufficient to account for the interpolation.[2] But, whether the words represent a reliable tradition or not, we may take them as indicating the light in which many at least of our Lord's contemporaries must have viewed His relations with women. To a modern Jewish student of the Gospels those relations appear 'highly original.'[3] They must have seemed 'highly original' indeed to men who held the view that religious instruction was unfit for women and only wasted upon them.

In Galilee, where there were fewer prejudices to offend than in Judaea, the influence of Jesus upon women may have attracted little notice. But it cannot have failed to provoke adverse comment in Jerusalem from those who set themselves to criticise and to condemn Him. It may well have aroused the suspicion and contempt suggested by the words in Marcion's 'Gospel.'

To St. Luke we are indebted for much of the information which we possess regarding the women with whom our Lord came into contact; just as we owe to him also, as the author of the

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1 *Adv. Haeres, Marc.*, 317.

2 *Texts and Studies*, ii. i. 230.

3 Montefiore, *Synoptic Gospels*, ii. 907.

Acts, a large part of our knowledge of the women of the apostolic Church. His Gospel has often been called the Gospel of Womanhood ; and the title is merited by the prominence which is given to women in the narrative. But each of the Gospels bears its own witness to the powerful impression produced upon women by the personality and teaching of Jesus. This impression could only have been made by one who had a sincere belief in the intellectual and spiritual possibilities of women.

That Jesus possessed such a belief is clear from the following illustrations.

Adopting the words in which the prophet Micah had described the social troubles in the Israel of his time, Jesus declared that in the family dissensions which would be the inevitable result of His influence members of both sexes would be concerned. Not only fathers and sons would be ' divided ' by a difference of opinion
Lk. xii. 53 about Him, but mothers and daughters, daughters in-law and mothers-in-law. Thus women might take an independent line in religion.

Again, Jesus accorded to women the same spiritual relationship to Himself as that to which He admitted men. ' Whosoever ' should do the
Mk. iii. 35 will of God entered at once into the deepest and most real affinity with Him. Sex constituted no barrier to this intimacy. ' The same is My brother and sister and mother.'

It cannot then be supposed that our Lord was indifferent to the women in the crowds which followed Him and listened to His teaching.

There is in fact evidence of His special interest in them. The ' twin parables,' as they are sometimes called, suggest, as Wetstein remarked long ago, that He adapted His instructions to the different classes of persons in His public audiences.[1] The parables of the leaven ' which a woman took,' the piece of silver which a woman lost, the oppressed and importunate widow, were no doubt intended mainly to interest and appeal to women, and are complementary to the parables of the mustard seed, the lost sheep, the friend at midnight, which enforce a similar lesson drawn from the action of a man. Perhaps our Lord had listeners of both sexes also in view when He forbade undue anxiety and pointed in St. Matthew vi. 28 to ' the lilies of the field,' which ' toil not ' (men's work on the land), ' neither do they spin ' (women's work in the home). In passing it may be pointed out that the parables based upon a woman's action are not without some bearing on the subject of the co-operation of women in the kingdom of God. ' Women also,' says Dr. Plummer, in commenting upon the parable of the lost piece of silver, ' may work for the recovery of sinners.'[2]

Lk. xiii. 20*f.*, xv. 8*ff.*, xviii. 2*ff.*

Moreover our Lord did not hesitate to break through all convention by instructing a woman privately. Mary of Bethany, for example, ' sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word.' Indeed, some of the deepest teaching of Jesus seems to have been given to individual women. Neither

Lk. x. 39

[1] *Commentary*, on Lk. xv. 8. [2] *St. Luke's Gospel, ad loc.*

the sex nor the past life of the Samaritan pre-
Jh. iv. 21ff. vented Him from declaring to her the nature of God, the true character of worship, and His own Messiahship. To Mary's sister, Martha, He re-
Jh. xi. 25 vealed Himself as 'the resurrection and the life,' on whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die; and the response with which His confidence in the spiritual capacity of women was met may be well illustrated by Martha's confession
Jh. xi. 27 'I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even He that cometh into the world.'

II.

Most significant of all as a preparation for the important part which women were to play in the life and work of the Church was the association with our Lord of a band of women disciples.

This connexion seems to have been formed as the result of a natural desire on the part of a
Lk. viii. 2f. number of well-to-do Galilaean women who 'had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities' to show their gratitude to Jesus by 'ministering of their substance' to Him and to the Twelve.

'Ministering' to our Lord is confined in the Gospels to angels and to women. The synoptists use the term to describe the service rendered by
Mk. i. 31 the mother of Simon Peter's wife after her restoration to health. St. Luke tells us that on
Lk. x. 40 the occasion when Mary 'sat at the Lord's feet and heard his word,' Martha 'was cumbered

about much serving,' or rather 'was distracted with the amount of ministering which she had to do.' She said to Jesus, 'Dost Thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve (or to minister) alone?' Again, St. John records that at the supper in the house of Simon the leper, Martha also 'served' (or 'ministered'). The meaning in these passages is clear. The 'ministering' was the preparation of a meal and no doubt included what we should call 'waiting at table.' The 'ministering' also of the women disciples was the supply of material wants. This is the simplest and most literal meaning of the term. But it must not be forgotten that the way was prepared for a wider and deeper meaning by our Lord's application of the term to Himself. 'The Son of Man,' He said, 'came not to be ministered unto but to minister.' And again, 'I am among you as he that serveth' (or, 'as he that ministereth'). In the Acts and Epistles every kind of Christian service is called 'ministering'; and men and women alike are described as 'ministers.' But of no man in the Gospels is it recorded that he 'ministered' to our Lord. It follows, therefore, that 'our Lord's relations with the women who attended Him are distinct from His relations with the men disciples in one remarkable particular. He ministered to the men; but the women ministered to Him. In their case Jesus consented to receive gifts and service. Thus theirs was the higher honour among His followers.'[1]

Jh. xii. 2

Mk. x. 45

Lk. xxii. 27

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[1] Adeney, *Women of the New Testament*, 100.

In itself the fact that women should contribute to the support of a teacher was by no means unusual. The scribes were supposed to earn their living by means of a trade and to make no charge for their instruction. As a matter of fact they more often depended for their maintenance upon the liberality of pious women. They were not always careful to avoid the charge of plundering. When Josephus accuses the Pharisees of 'inveigling' women,[1] he no doubt means that they imposed upon their generosity. Sometimes they even 'devoured widows' houses.' Thus the official religious education was endowed by those to whom it was denied. No surprise therefore can have been occasioned by the assistance in material things which was rendered to Jesus by women.

Lk. xx. 47

It was our Lord's treatment of the women who 'ministered' to Him which distinguished Him from other teachers whose needs were met in a similar way. Not only did He allow them to accompany Him on His journeys when 'He went about through cities and villages preaching and bringing good tidings of the kingdom of God,' but, with the exception of that instruction which was reserved for the inner circle of the Twelve, His teaching was given as freely to the women as to the men. They became 'followers' in the two senses in which the term is used in the Gospels; they were attached to our Lord's person, and they received from Him spiritual training.

Lk. viii. 1*ff.*

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[1] *Antiquities*, xvii. ii. 4.

This is a fact which is often obscured by the use of the term ' disciples ' in a general sense. On many occasions in the narrative of the Gospels where no separate mention of the presence of the women is made it must be presumed. For example, it was to ' the disciples ' that Jesus foretold His passion and resurrection. But it was to the women that the angels at the tomb recalled the announcement. ' Remember,' they said, ' how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' And St. Luke adds ' they remembered His words.'

Lk. ix. 18*ff.*

Lk. xxiv. 6*ff.*

Five of the women disciples are known to us by name ; and each of the synoptic Gospels tells us that there were ' many ' others.

Lk. viii. 3, Matt. xxvii. 55, Mk. xv. 41

The leader of the group was evidently Mary Magdalene, *i.e.* of Magdala, a town on the lake of Galilee, some three miles from Capernaum. As Simon Peter heads every list of the Twelve, so in the synoptic Gospels in every mention of the band of women disciples the name of Mary Magdalene stands first ; and in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter she is designated the ' disciple of the Lord.' She is further described by St. Luke as a woman ' from whom seven devils (or demons) had gone out,' and in the appendix to St. Mark's Gospel her deliverance is attributed to the direct intervention of Jesus. The nature of her possession need not be discussed here ; but it may be pointed out that there is no evidence for the conjecture that Mary is to be identified with ' the woman that was in the

Lk. viii. 2

Mk. xvi. 9

Lk. vii. 37*ff.*

city, a sinner,' who at the house of Simon the Pharisee anointed the feet of Jesus.

Lk. viii. 3, xxiv. 10

After Mary Magdalene St. Luke twice names Joanna, 'the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward.' Godet supposes that Chuza was the 'nobleman' of Capernaum, whose son our Lord healed and of

Jh. iv. 53

whom St. John says that 'himself believed and his whole house.' Dr. Plummer, who seems to favour the identification, remarks that 'in that case her husband would be likely to let her go and minister to Christ.'[1] Joanna and another member

Lk. viii. 3

of the group, Susanna, of whom no description is given, are mentioned in St. Luke's Gospel only.

It would seem not improbable that St. Luke derived from Joanna the detailed account of the trial of our Lord before Herod recorded in chapter xxiii. 8*ff*; and it may have been she who supplied to him also the story of the visit of the women to the tomb on the resurrection morning. Possibly we owe to her a still greater debt. It is natural to suppose that the stories contained in the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel came directly or indirectly from the mother of the Lord. Ramsay, who thinks that the narrative is founded upon an oral communication, suggests that, if it were not told to St. Luke by Mary herself, 'the intermediary is more likely to have been a woman than a man. There is,' he says, 'a womanly spirit in the whole narrative, which seems inconsistent with the transmission from

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[1] *St. Luke's Gospel, ad loc.*

man to man."[1] Dr. Sanday thinks that St. Luke may have been supplied with 'a special (written) source' through one of the women disciples, probably Joanna.[2]

The name of Mary, 'the mother of James the less and of Joses,' occurs in each of the synoptic Gospels. She is possibly the woman whom St. John calls 'the wife of Clopas.' Salome is mentioned by name only by St. Mark; but there can be little doubt that she is to be identified with the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John. Bishop Westcott[3] and other modern commentators believe that she was also the sister of the Lord's mother who, according to St. John's Gospel, stood at the cross with the three Marys.

Matt. xxvii. 56, Mk. xv. 40, Lk. xxiv. 10

Jh. xix. 25

Mk. xv. 40

Jh. xix. 25

III.

It is in the accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection that the women disciples become prominent in the Gospels; and the honourable place accorded to them in the narratives of the evangelists is a reflection of the high position assigned to them in the Church.

Each of the synoptic Gospels records the fact that they followed our Lord from Galilee to Jerusalem when He went up to the Passover for the last time. Women were not required by the law to attend the yearly feasts; but their appear-

Matt. xxvii. 55. Mk. xv. 40*f.* Lk. xxiii. 49, 55.

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1 *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* 88.

2 art. 'Jesus Christ,' Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.*

3 *St. John's Gospel, ad loc.*

ance at least at the Passover had become customary. There was nothing unusual therefore in the intention of the women disciples to be present. They naturally accompanied Jesus and 'ministered' to Him, as St. Matthew's Gospel expressly tells us, on this journey, as upon His other journeys, but with the apprehension to which His own words had given rise that this might be the last occasion upon which they would have the opportunity of rendering Him service.

We know nothing of their movements during their stay in the city until the day of the crucifixion. The synoptists agree in placing them within sight of the cross but 'afar off'; while St. John tells us that 'there were standing by the cross of Jesus,' within speaking distance, 'His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.' In striking contrast to the courage and devotion of the women the apostles and men disciples, with the exception of St. John, were absent at the last unless we can suppose that some of them were included in those whom St. Luke calls 'His acquaintance,' who also 'stood afar off.'

Matt. xxvii. 55, Mk. xv. 40*f.*, Lk. xxiii. 49

Jh. xix. 25

When the burial took place the women followed to Joseph's garden and 'beheld the tomb and how His body was laid.' That night they 'prepared spices and ointments,' intending to performthe last offices for the dead on the day after the sabbath.

Lk. xxiii. 55*f.*

No attempt may be made here to harmonize the different accounts of the resurrection morning. It is enough to say that in St. John's Gospel and in the appendix to St. Mark's Gospel the Lord

Jh. xx. 11*ff.*, Mk. xvi. 9

' appeared first to Mary Magdalene ' ; that in St. Matthew's Gospel she is said to have been accompanied by ' the other Mary,' the mother of James and Joses ; that in the Gospel of St. Mark, in its present form, and in St. Luke's Gospel there is no appearance of the Lord at the tomb at all, but the two Marys and another woman or other women see an angel or angels who tell them of the resurrection. Thus the Gospels with all their disagreement agree in this, that it was to one or more of the women that the first announcement of the resurrection was made or the first appearance of the risen Lord was vouchsafed. This privilege alone must have secured, not for the women disciples only but for their sex, a position of honour in the Church of the first days.

Matt. xxviii. 1*ff*

Mk. xvi. 1*ff*., Lk. xxiv. 1*ff*.

But the women were also the first to carry the news of the resurrection to others. St. Mark tells us that at first ' they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.' But St. Luke relates how ' they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest.' Mary Magdalene in St. John's Gospel is bidden by the Lord to go and announce to His ' brethren ' His coming ascension ; and in the appendix to St. Mark's Gospel she is said to have gone and told of His appearance to her to ' them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.' According to St. Matthew's Gospel the injunction was given first by the angel ; then as the women ' ran to bring His disciples word ' it was repeated by the Lord.

Mk. xvi. 8

Lk. xxiv. 9

Jh. xx. 17

Mk. xvi. 10

Matt. xxviii. 7*ff*

It is true that the testimony of the women failed to convince the men. To the apostles their
Lk xxiv. 11 message seemed to be nothing but 'idle talk, and they disbelieved them.' But the evidence of the women was not to be slighted. The Lord Himself 'upbraided' the apostles 'with their unbelief
Mk. xvi. 4 and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.' Soon there must have been recognized the special distinction which had been conferred upon the women disciples, not only as the first witnesses of the resurrection but also as the first commissioned messengers of the risen Christ.

Various explanations have been given of St. Paul's omission of the women in his list of the
1 Cor. xv. 5*ff.* witnesses to the resurrection in First Corinthians. 'Sometimes,' says Dr. Knowling, 'it is urged that women were not admitted as witnesses in a Jewish court of law, or that as women were at a discount in that age their witness would not tell, and the apostle feared that an appeal to such testimony would only produce an unfavourable impression.' Dr. Knowling's own suggestion is more probable. He thinks that St. Paul is citing only witnesses who could be described as official, persons 'who would claim special credit in the Church,' and that 'it would be nothing to the point to lay stress upon the testimony of women, whose names, however valued elsewhere, would carry little or no weight at Corinth.'[1] The possibility that the evidence of the women was unknown to St. Paul

[1] *Testimony of St. Paul to Christ*, 301*f.*

cannot of course be entirely set aside ; and in any case there is no reason to suppose that the apostle meant to give a full and exhaustive list of the appearances.

When however the written Gospels came to be circulated the important part played by the women at the time of the crucifixion and resurrection became known to all ; and the public reading of the Gospels in the church assemblies ensured that it would not be forgotten. Of one woman's act of love and sacrifice the Lord had said that wherever the Gospel should be preached ' throughout the whole world ' it should be ' spoken of for a memorial of her ' ; and wherever the resurrection was proclaimed as the foundation fact of Christianity there was bound up with it the story of the devotion of the women disciples and the signal honour with which they were rewarded.

Mk. xiv. 9

IV.

It was the special function of the apostles to bear witness to the truth of the resurrection. But all the disciples, without distinction of sex, shared in this privilege and were endowed with the power in which to exercise it. This is the meaning of the commission and the promise which were given by the Lord on the evening after the resurrection and of the Pentecostal out-pouring of the Spirit which was then prefigured. St. Luke tells us that on the former occasion the two

disciples who had met the Lord on the road to
Lk. xxiv. 33 Emmaus had 'found the Eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.' A short time before, they had told their Companion the news which the women had brought to the men.
Lk. xxiv. 22f. 'Certain women of our company,' they said, 'amazed us, having been early at the tomb, and when they found not His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels which said that He was alive.' There can be no doubt that by the phrase 'them that were with them' we are to understand, amongst others, the women disciples of whom the two had spoken.

St. John has preserved for us a fuller account than St. Luke of what took place at this gathering.
Jh. xx. 19ff. 'Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had said this, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you; as the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.'

It is held by some that these words were spoken only to the apostles. But it would seem to be clear that whatever may have been the duties entrusted and the powers granted, they were given to the whole body of disciples and not to any class among them. 'If it be said,' writes Bishop Westcott, 'that the particular commission

may have been given to a part out of the whole company, it is sufficient to reply that such an assumption is not only perfectly arbitrary, but against the whole tenour of the record.'[1] And again, 'there is nothing in the context to show that the gift was confined to any particular group (as the apostles) among the whole company present. The commission must therefore be regarded as properly the commission of the Christian society, and not as that of the Christian ministry.'[2]

The women disciples, then, shared equally with the men in 'the apostolic mission of all Christians, which no subsequent delegation of specific duties to others can annul.'[3]

Any doubt upon this point disappears when we leave the Gospels and read in the Acts the account of the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. St. Luke has already told us that after the ascension, the Eleven 'went up into the upper chamber where they were abiding,' and 'with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.' Then on the day of Pentecost 'they were all together in one place,' and 'there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit

Acts i 13.

Acts ii. 1*ff.*

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1 *Revelation of the Risen Lord*, xix.

2 *St. John's Gospel* (Gk. ed.), ii. 351.

3 Westcott, *Revelation of the Risen Lord*, 83.

gave them utterance.' Moreover, when St. Peter,
Acts ii. 14ff. ' standing up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and spake forth ' to ' the multitude ' which ' came together,' he drew particular attention to the fact that in the bestowal of the Spirit upon the Church there was no distinction of sex, as there was none of race or of class. ' This is that,' he said, ' which
Joel ii. 28f. was spoken by the prophet Joel ; And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams : yea, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of My Spirit ; and they shall prophesy.'

We need not suppose that either prophet or apostle grasped the full meaning of the wonderful words. Joel, it would appear from the context, understood ' all flesh ' to mean only all Israel ; and even when St. Peter speaks of the promise
Acts ii. 39 being ' to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him,' he was no doubt thinking mainly, not of the Gentiles as such, but of the Jews of the Dispersion and their converts. In the same way the far-reaching results of the participation of the women in the gift of the Spirit cannot have been realized at once. But the principle of the equality of men and women in the Church, for which our Lord's relations with the women disciples had prepared the way, was now definitely asserted ; and the duty and right of women to co-operate with men in the work of the Church could not be questioned.

It is only thus that we can understand the high position and the powerful influence of Christian women in the apostolic age.

Even the prevailing view of the marriage relation was at least modified from the first by the recognition that women shared with men all the privileges and responsibilities of church membership. Wives could be no longer 'in religious matters a sort of appendix to their husbands.' St. Peter himself had not forgotten the lesson of Pentecost when years later in speaking of husband and wife he called them in a remarkable phrase 'joint-heirs of the grace of life.' It is true that in the same passage he acquiesces in the social subordination of women and commends to wives the example of 'the holy women' of the Old Testament who were 'in subjection to their own husbands.' But as Dr. Bigg, in commenting upon these words, remarks, 'the husband must remember that she, whom nature and the law make his inferior, is his equal, and may be his superior, in the eyes of God.'[1]

1 Peter v. 7

V.

We have assumed that 'the women' who assembled with the men in 'the upper chamber' on the days between the ascension and Pentecost were the Galilaean women disciples. We have only to remember that the Acts is the continua-

[1] *First Peter, ad loc.*

tion of St. Luke's Gospel to see that the assumption is correct. No doubt however there were other women present, followers of our Lord from Jerusalem and the neighbourhood ; and amongst these perhaps the sisters of Bethany, and Mary the mother of John Mark.

Codex Bezae has the reading in Acts i. 14 ' with the women and children.' The addition is probably intended to limit the women in ' the upper chamber ' to the wives of the apostles. If so, it may be numbered with several other indications in this manuscript of a later dislike to the prominence of women in the apostolic Church and a desire to minimize their importance. For a controversial reason also, though of a different kind, the reformers of the sixteenth century translated ' women ' as ' wives ' here.[1] But, as John Lightfoot in the following century remarked, the interpretation is 'too strait, for doubtless there were some that had no husbands at all or none there.'[2] At the same time it is not impossible that some of the wives of the apostles were included in the company.

In spite of an early tradition to the contrary, it would seem probable that most of the apostles were married men. The Jews regarded the words in Genesis ' be fruitful and multiply ' as a command which was binding upon all. Marriage was considered to be a duty ; and celibacy was rare. The sayings in the Talmud to the effect that

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[1] *e.g.* Erasmus, Calvin.

[2] *Commentary, ad loc.*

' whoever has no wife rests without blessing ' and ' is not called a man ' are only formulations of ideas which had always prevailed.[1] Dr. McNeile, however, thinks that if the words about men who had ' made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake,' found only in St. Matthew's Gospel, are genuine words of our Lord, they may refer ' to the fact that some of the disciples had given up thoughts of marriage in order to follow Him.'[2] But it would seem from another passage that the apostles were already married when they received their call and that they left their wives during the period in which they followed Jesus. ' There is no man,' said our Lord, according to St. Luke, ' that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.' And this was in answer to St. Peter's declaration, ' Lo, we have left our own, and followed Thee.'

Matt. xix. 12

Lk. xviii. 29*f.*

Moreover, St. Paul in First Corinthians, if the usual interpretation of the words be adopted, certainly suggests that most of the apostles were married men. He is claiming for himself and his fellow missionaries the right to be maintained at the expense of the Church, and he contends that the wives of those who are married must also be provided for. ' Have we no right,' he asks, ' to lead about a wife that is a believer (literally, a

1 Cor. ix. 5

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1 for refs. in Talmud, see art. ' Marriage ' (Jewish) in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.*

2 *St. Matthew's Gospel, ad loc.*

sister), even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas ? '

From this passage it is evident also that the wives of the apostles were in the habit of accompanying their husbands on their missionary journeys. This is a remarkable fact and worthy of notice in connexion with the extent to which women co-operated with men in the work of the apostolic Church. Like the pioneers of missionary enterprize in the early nineteenth century, the first preachers of the Gospel took their wives with them ; and these women shared in the dangers and difficulties which their husbands encountered and no doubt assisted them in their evangelistic labours. Clement of Alexandria indeed calls them ' fellow-ministers ' with their husbands, and tells us that they devoted themselves to the teaching of their own sex.[1]

St. Peter is the only apostle of whose marriage we have direct evidence in the Gospels. St. Paul's reference to him as a married man is confirmed by the accounts of the cure by our Lord of his wife's mother in the early days of the ministry. This took place at Capernaum, where it would seem Simon Peter and his wife, his mother-in-law, and his brother Andrew, lived together.

Mk. i. 29*ff.*

Clement of Alexandria has recorded a tradition, which is repeated by Eusebius, that St. Peter's wife suffered martyrdom : ' some say, the blessed Peter saw his wife, when she was led to death, and rejoiced because of her calling and her return

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1 *Stromateis*, iii. 6.

home, but called her to exhort and comfort her, naming her by her name, O you, remember the Lord.' Clement adds, 'such was the married life of the blessed and their perfect behaviour to those whom they loved most.'[2]

There is no reason for doubting the story; and if it be true, it suggests that St. Peter's wife was a person of some importance in the Church. The tradition 'implies,' says Dr. Bigg, 'that she had been not only the companion, but the active assistant of her husband.' And again, 'tradition could not have regarded her as a martyr, unless she had done something to earn martyrdom—unless, that is to say, she had taken an active part in her husband's labours.'[1]

It is possible that St. Peter's wife is mentioned again in the New Testament. At the close of the 'First' Epistle of St. Peter there is the following greeting: 'she that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you.' Most commentators take 'Babylon' to be a cryptogram for 'Rome,' and understand the whole phrase as a figurative description of the church in the city. Bengel, Alford, and others, however, believe that the reference is to St. Peter's wife, who may well have wished to add a message to her husband's letter. Dr. Bigg holds this view and points out that the objections to a literal interpretation of the words 'are considerably weakened, if St. Peter's wife was a very well-known personage; and there can be no doubt that she was.'[2]

1 Peter v. 13

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[1] *op. cit*, vii. ii. [2] *First Peter*, 77 and on v. 13. [3] *loc. cit.*

VI.

St. Chrysostom describes the gathering in 'the upper chamber' as an ideal assembly, because of the absence of sex distinction. He is alluding in one on his homilies of St. Matthew's Gospel to the separation of the sexes in the churches of his time. This, he says, was a regrettable necessity. It was not the primitive custom. 'For in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female; and in the days of the apostles men and women were together. Have you not heard,' he asks, 'that there were gathered together men and women in the upper chamber? And that meeting was worthy of heaven.'[1]

This absence of sex distinction, together with St. Luke's emphasis upon the absolute unanimity of the disciples before and after Pentecost, makes it impossible to suppose that the women were not included among 'the brethren' in the midst of whom St. Peter 'stood up' and proposed the election of a successor to Judas. In a paren-

Acts i. 15

thesis St. Luke says that 'there was a multitude of persons gathered together about a hundred and twenty.' The Greek word here for 'persons' is 'names'; and we now know that its use in this sense was not uncommon in the Greek of the time.[2] Neither this term nor the term 'brethren' can be understood to refer to men only. The latter term is constantly used in the Acts and Epistles of Christians irrespective of sex; an individual

[1] *In Ev. Matt. Homil.* lxxiii. 3.

[2] Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, 196.

Christian man is a 'brother,' and a Christian woman is a 'sister.' Nor can the words, literally 'men brethren,' with which St. Peter begins his speech, be taken to indicate that the men disciples only were present. This was no doubt the usual method of addressing a gathering at a time when women were of little account; and St. Peter, if indeed the phrase represents the actual words which he said, may have been slow to adopt in formal speech the language required by the new equality of men and women which was at first imperfectly realized. With a similar formula of address he begins his speech to 'the multitude' on the day of Pentecost, and again to 'all the people' who ran together to Solomon's porch after the healing of the lame man. And no one will say that the phrase 'men Israelites' which he used upon these occasions proves that there were no women in the wondering crowds. Acts ii. 22, iii. 12

But the whole passage taken with that which precedes it makes it clear that in filling up the vacancy in their number the apostles sought and gained the co-operation of the entire body of disciples. Nothing can be more unlikely than that the mother of the Lord and the women with her were allowed to join in 'the prayer' generally and were asked to withdraw when the subject of the prayer was the selection of an apostle. Yet John Lightfoot thought that 'reason itself is against it that any women should be accounted of that number';[1] and no doubt upon this

[1] *Commentary, ad loc.*

arbitrary assumption some manuscripts and versions have changed ' names ' into ' men.'[1]

The fact is that, while we can know nothing with certainty about the part played by the women on this occasion or on the other occasions when ' the multitude,' *i.e.* the ' community,' or ' the church,' is said to have acted together, there is nothing in the language of the Acts to suggest that women were excluded from any of the privileges and responsibilities of membership in the Church. There is not in the New Testament the slightest foundation for Dr. Hort's remark that in the apostolic age the Church was ' apparently the sum of all the male adult members.'[2]

No further reference is made in the New Testament to ' Mary the mother of Jesus ' ; and we know nothing of her subsequent history. According to St. John xix. 26 the Lord on the Cross committed her to the care of St. John,' and from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.' If Salome were indeed her sister and St. John Salome's son, the arrangement is in part explained. Whether she remained in Palestine till her death or accompanied St. John to Ephesus is a matter on which tradition does not agree. At all events there is no evidence that she exercised any particular influence, or was regarded as a prominent person, in the apostolic Church.

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[1] E, Vulg., Syr.

[2] *Christian Ecclesia*, 229.

VII.

It is unlikely that any religious movement in which women have been specially interested has escaped the sneer that women after all are an easy prey. The New Testament itself may be cited in illustration of the contempt from which the opponents of such movements have seldom been able to refrain. To the writer of the Pastoral Epistles the speculations of the teachers with whom he disagreed were nothing but ' old wives' fables,' legends which none but old women invent or believe. Again, it was ' silly,' or rather ' insignificant women,' inconstant and unintelligent, whom the crafty heretics were able to delude.

1 Tim. iv. 7

2 Tim. iii. 6*f.*

A similar reproach was levelled against the Church in the second century. The ' very odious imputation,' as Gibbon calls it,[1] regarding the character of the converts, included a derisive reference to the number of women whom Christianity attracted. Celsus, for example, classed ' mere women ' with the low-born and the stupid, whom alone, he said, Christians wished and were able to convince of the truth of their religion.[2]

We do not know at what stage this charge first made its appearance. St. Paul may be alluding to an early form of it in the first chapter of First Corinthians, where he admits that his converts were drawn for the most part from the despised classes. Women may well have been included

1 Cor. i. 26*ff.*

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1 *Decline and Fall* (ed. Bury), ii. 70.

2 Origen, *contra Celsum*, iii. 55.

among ' the foolish things ' and ' the weak things of the world,' and among ' the things that are not,' the things which did not count with philosophers or statesmen. This seems all the more likely when we remember that, in Dr. Findlay's words, Christianity ' had powerfully stirred the feminine mind at Corinth,'[1] and may almost have seemed to be a women's movement. The message of the cross which in itself appeared sheer folly to the cultured Greek would not be commended to him by the number of women to whom it appealed ; and he would not be slow to make this point against it.

Such language as that of Celsus is of course the language of controversial exaggeration. Christians gloried in the knowledge that the Gospel met the needs of the lowest and most ignorant of the people. But it was never true that the Church was ' almost entirely composed of the dregs of the populace.' [2] Sir William Ramsay is probably nearer the truth when he says that Christianity ' spread at first among the educated more rapidly than among the uneducated.'[3] If ' not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble ' joined the Church, the majority of the converts were middle class people ; and always and everywhere there were Christians of higher social standing. At Corinth itself, for example, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and Erastus, the city treasurer, were members of the church.

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1 *First Corinthians*, on vii. 10. 2 Gibbon, *loc. cit.*
3 *Church in the Roman Empire*, 57.

There was good reason, however, for the taunt that Christianity had a special attraction for women. Women everywhere were among the first to respond to the preaching of the Gospel. Women were among the foremost in promoting the cause of the Church. Even if this were not abundantly evident from the direct and incidental references to Christian women in the Acts and Epistles, no one could have doubted it. For the success of Christianity in the Roman Empire of the first century depended no less upon the success of its appeal to women than it does to-day in missionary lands. Had women remained uninfluenced by the Gospel, had women not been admitted to the Church on equal terms with men, and had they not been allowed to co-operate with men in the extension of the Church, Christianity must have shared the fate of Mithraism—a cult in which women had no place.[1] No doubt there were among the women converts many who belonged to the humblest classes. But, as in the case of the men converts, there were not a few women of wealth and position. This is evident from the passages in ' First ' Peter and the First Epistle to Timothy in which Christian women are warned against extravagant dress and jewellery. Almost all the Christian women of the apostolic Church whose names we know were like the women disciples in the Gospels able to ' minister of their substance ' to others. This fact and the importance which it gave them

I Pet. iii. 3*f.*
I Tim. ii. 9*f.*

1 Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, ii. 263, 269 272*ff.*

would seem often to account for their mention in the New Testament.

It was natural that the first converts, whether men or women, who were in a position to help their fellow-Christians, should be recognized as leaders in the communities which gathered round them. St. Paul, for example, calls the household
1 Cor. xvi. 15f. of Stephanas 'the first-fruits of Achaia,' and says that the members of it, among whom women may be presumed, had 'set themselves to minister unto the saints.' He bids the Corinthian Christians to 'be in subjection unto such and to every one that helpeth in the work and laboureth.'

One of the most important services which the first converts could render was the provision of a house in which the apostle and his companions could lodge and where they could hold their meetings and deal with enquirers. The man or woman who was able to supply this need and who became the host of the apostle 'and of the whole
Rom. xvi. 23 church,' as St. Paul calls Gaius of Corinth, naturally took a prominent position in the local community; and the house became the centre of its life. It was the meeting-place for worship, for instruction, for business. From it the relief of the poorer members of the community was administered; in it was shown the hospitality which was a special feature of the apostolic age.

It was this domestic character of early Christianity which afforded women a peculiar opportunity of service. Sometimes as wives they joined with their husbands in making their homes 'house-churches'; more often, it would seem,

a widow placed her house at the disposal of her brethren. In this way they became 'nursing mothers' to the infant communities; and their assistance and influence in the building up of the Church can hardly be overestimated. Isaiah xlix. 23

VIII.

The first direct mention in the Acts of women converts at Jerusalem occurs in the notice of the spiritual awakening which followed the tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira. 'Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.' At Pentecost, however, the original nucleus of the church had been increased by 'about three thousand souls.' 'Day by day' there had been added to this number 'those that were being saved.' And as a result of St. Peter's preaching after the healing of the lame man, 'many of them that heard the word believed.' There is no reason to doubt that women were included in these early conversions and were among those who from the first 'continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.' Acts v. 14 ii. 41 ii. 47 iv. 4 ii. 42

But to the words 'many of them that heard the word believed' St. Luke adds a statement which seems to be an estimate of the total membership of the church at the time: 'and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.' Olshausen, Weiss,[1] and others take this to mean

[1] *Commentaries, ad loc.*

that at first there were few women in the Christian community at Jerusalem. It is perhaps unlikely that the Greek word translated 'men' here means 'persons.' The term is occasionally used without reference to sex; thus the 'men' of Nineveh, the 'men' of Gennesaret, the 'men' of this generation in the Gospels, must mean the 'people.' In Grimm-Thayer's *Lexicon* this verse is quoted as an instance of the use of 'men,' when 'persons of either sex are included, but named after the more important'; and some commentators agree. It is, however, more probable that St. Luke wishes in this passage to draw special attention to the large number of males who had joined the church, leaving us to make the natural inference that with them there were a great many women. It will be remembered that in St. Matthew's Gospel the words 'besides women and children' are inserted in the accounts of the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand 'men.' St. Luke no doubt intends us to make mentally the same addition here.

Matt. xii. 41, xiv. 35, Lk. xi. 31

Matt. xiv. 21, xv. 38

At the time of the appointment of the Seven when 'the number of the disciples was multiplying', the membership of women in the church had assumed considerable proportions. This is evident from the development of a system of relief for Christian widows, similar to that organized by the Jews, and from the 'murmuring' of the Hellenist Christians against the Hebrew Christians, 'because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.' Widows had been the object of our Lord's special sympathy, and the church

Acts vi. 1*ff.*

had made their care one of its chief concerns. So large and important had 'this business' become that there was urgent need for definite officers to give their whole time to its superintendence. It is significant indeed that it was this women's question which necessitated the first delegation of authority and administration by the apostles.

Another indication of the number of women in the church of the earliest days at Jerusalem is to be found in the mention of women victims in the 'great persecution' which followed the martyrdom of St. Stephen. 'Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.' Years afterwards this feature of his attack upon Christianity was recalled by St. Paul when at the time of his arrest he described his conversion to the people in the Temple court: 'I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.' None of the martyrs' names are recorded; but as Dr. Knowling suggests, 'some of the devout and ministering women' of the Gospels 'may well have been included' in the persecution.[1] In passing, it may be noted that St. Luke applies the terms 'church' and 'those of the way' equally to women and to men, as we have already observed the term 'brethren' is applied. Another title by which Christians were known among themselves is found in the words of Ananias of Damascus in which he refers to the

Acts viii. 1ff

xxii. 4

[1] *Acts*, on viii. 3.

Acts ix. 13 violence of Saul : ' Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem.' Thus alike by their fellow-Christians and by their enemies women were regarded as full members of the Church ; and they shared with men the highest privilege of all, that of suffering for their faith.

IX.

Three women of the church of Jerusalem are mentioned in the Acts by name : Sapphira, ' Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark,' and Rhoda her portress.

v. 1*ff.* Sapphira and her husband, Ananias, were among those ' possessors of lands or houses ' who sold their property for the benefit of the poorer members of the community. Ananias, however, ' kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it.' Sapphira was held equally responsible with her husband, and to both alike was meted out the punishment of their deceit. The ' possession ' which they sold is described as a *chorion, i.e.* a plot of ground, perhaps an estate ; and Sapphira may be regarded as typical of many well-to-do women who had joined the church ; who, however, were unlike her in their sincere devotion to its cause.

xii. 12*ff.* Mary the mother of John Mark was not one of those who gave up their possessions. She found another way of rendering service to her brethren by

retaining her house for their use. As no mention is made of her husband by St. Luke, it may be presumed that she was a widow ; and the description of her residence is evidence that she was a woman of some social position. Her house may be compared to the highpriest's house ; for like his it had a *pylon*, or covered passage leading to the road, and at both there was a woman ' that kept the door ' or ' gate.' Jh. xviii. 16*f.*

Moreover, St. Paul calls Mark ' the cousin of Barnabas,' and the relationship may have been through his mother. Barnabas himself was a property owner, for ' having a field,' he ' sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.' Again, if, as Bishop Chase has suggested, the term ' attendant ' applied to Mark in Acts xiii. 5 really means that he was the synagogue ' minister ' or *chazzan*,[1] Mary's son was a person of some importance. The family appears in fact to have been of respectable and prosperous connexions and must have been a valuable asset to the church at Jerusalem. Col. iv. 10 Acts iv. 36*f.*

At the time of St. Peter's imprisonment ' prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him.' At least one of the meetings for intercession was held in Mary's house, where, we are told, ' many were gathered together and were praying ' on the night of the apostle's escape. We cannot be certain that it was the chief meeting-place of the Christians in the city. There were other houses where the disciples met for the xii. 5 xii. 12

[1] art. ' Peter ' (Simon), Hastings' D.B.

Acts ii. 46, v. 42 ' breaking of bread ' and for instruction ; and on this occasion St. James, the Lord's brother, who had become the recognized head of the community, xii. 17 and other ' brethren,' were elsewhere. But there can be no doubt that the house was an important *rendezvous* ; and it is significant that St. Peter should make his way thither as a matter of course.

It is possible that there is a still greater interest attaching to Mary's house. The ' upper chamber ' in which the men and women disciples met between the ascension and Pentecost may reasonably be supposed to have been the same room as that in which the appearances of the risen Lord took place. It is true that the word translated ' upper chamber ' in Acts i. 13 is not the word translated ' upper room ' in the Gospels, although both words are rendered *coenaculum* in the Vulgate The room may also have been the scene of the last supper. And further, if tradition can be relied upon, it may have been the place in which the out-pouring of the Spirit occurred. Bishop Chase and others think that the ' house ' in which the Spirit descended must have been one of the chambers of the Temple ;[1] and in support of this theory it is pointed out that ' house ' in the Septuagint and in Josephus frequently bears this meaning. But, as Dr. Swete remarks, ' no event of the seven weeks which ended on the day of Pentecost seems more clearly to demand closed doors and the privacy of the upper room.'[2]

Dr. Sanday does not think it ' a very precarious

[1] Chase, *Credibility of Acts*, 30*ff*.

[2] *Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, 69.

step' to identify the room in which all these events took place with the large room in Mary's house.[1] An objection to its identification with the room in which the last supper was held has recently been raised.[2] St. Mark and St. Luke tell us that our Lord sent a message to 'the goodman of the house' in which He wished to 'eat the Passover' with His disciples. Now if Mary were a widow it would account for the house being called hers in the Acts. But then there would be no place for a master of the house. On the other hand Mary's husband may have died before St. Luke wrote the Acts, and she and her house have continued to be well-known in the Church. In favour of the identification there is the extremely probable suggestion that the young man who had so narrow an escape on the night of the betrayal of Jesus was John Mark. On hearing the tumult in the garden this youth had evidently rushed out, lightly clad, from a house in the vicinity. If it was from Mary's house that he came, this may then have been actually in the 'place,' or *chorion*, 'which was named Gethsemane.'[3]

Mk. xiv. 14, Lk. xxii. 11

Mk. xiv. 51 *f.*

Dr. Sanday, who supposes that 'the house of Mary and her son was the one central meeting-place of the church of Jerusalem throughout the apostolic age,' considers that these 'combinations are quite legitimate, and only give unity and compactness to the history.'[4] At all events it is

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1 *Sacred Sites of the Gospels*, 83.

2 *Journal of Theological Studies*, xvii. 398.

3 Petavel, *Epositor*, iv. iii. 220.

4 loc. cit.

interesting and important for our purpose to notice that the first ' house-church ' of which we have any account was in a woman's house. If indeed this house may be called ' the cradle of the Church,' Mary as its head was the first of the ' nursing mothers,' to whose care the early Christian communities owed so much.

Rhoda, her portress, must also be included among the members of the church at Jerusalem. The conversion of the head of a household was naturally followed by the conversion of the family with the servants and dependants. Rhoda's joy at the sound of St. Peter's voice, and her confidence that it was he who stood at the gate, make it certain that she shared the faith of her mistress. As Lady Ramsay has recently pointed out, there is nothing in the term ' maid,' by which she is described, to suggest youth ; ' yet Rhoda's action in leaving Peter standing outside the closed door while she ran back to tell that he was there seems to indicate that she was a young girl.'[1] Whether this be so or not, she may be cited as an example of many women of the apostolic Church belonging to the humbler classes, who, in ways unknown to us, but according to their opportunities, served their brethren and took their part in furthering the great cause.

Ramsay thinks that the account of St. Peter's escape from prison and his arrival at Mary's house must have been derived from Rhoda ' or from someone who took a warm interest in her.'

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[1] *Expository Times*, xxvii. 218.

He says that 'we have here personal recollection, narrated to St. Luke by the maid herself and caught by his sympathetic and imaginative mind.' And again, 'it was the great event of her life, and she told it in that striking fashion in which we read it.'[1]

X.

Leaving Jerusalem, we may consider now the notices in the Acts of Christian women in the churches of Samaria, Judaea, and Syria.

In 'the city of Samaria,' *i.e.* Sebaste, the capital, women were among the first converts. 'The multitudes,' St. Luke tells us, 'gave heed with one accord' to the preaching of Philip the evangelist; and when 'they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.' Before the coming of the evangelist the men and women of Samaria 'from the least to the greatest' had fallen victims to the delusions of Simon the sorcerer; but it is perhaps unnecessary to assume, as Wetstein seems to do,[2] that the direct mention of the conversion of the women is due to a desire on St. Luke's part to record a special triumph of the Gospel, because 'women are drawn away from superstitions with greater difficulty than men.' Acts viii. 5*ff.*

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[1] *Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, 209*ff.*

[2] *Commentary, ad loc.*

Acts xvi. 15

The baptism of the women converts at Samaria and the baptism of Lydia at Philippi are the only baptisms of women actually recorded in the New Testament. But if children may be presumed in the ' households ' which were baptized, with still greater certainty may we include women ; and no one will suggest that wherever women were admitted to the Church they were not admitted in precisely the same way as men. There is probably an allusion to the baptism of women in

1 Cor. vii. 14

St. Paul's words in First Corinthians about mixed marriages. He says that the Christian partner must not dissolve the marriage, if the heathen partner does not desire to do so ; because ' the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother.' In view of an earlier passage in the same epistle, in which ' ye were washed ' is paralleled by ' ye were sanctified,' Robertson-Plummer understand the sanctification here to refer to ' the baptismal consecration, in which the unbelieving husband shares through union with a Christian wife.'[1]

The baptism of women in the apostolic Church has an importance of its own, which would seem to have been overlooked. It must be remembered that both men and women converts to Judaism were baptized and were required to offer a sacrifice. But circumcision, the real rite of initiation, the sign of the covenant between God and His people, could be performed upon men only. There

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[1] *First Corinthians, ad loc.*

can be no doubt that this fact emphasized, and even symbolized, the inequality of men and women in religion. Now there was in the early days of the Church a Judaizing section which wished to enforce circumcision upon all Gentile converts to Christianity. 'Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses,' they said, 'ye cannot be saved.' But this party did not succeed, in the words of St. Paul, in 'bringing into bondage' the Gentile Christians. At the conference held at Jerusalem and described in Acts xv. their liberty was vindicated; it was decided that circumcision was not to be required. The decision was of course of the first importance, but we are concerned here only with its effect upon the position of women in the Church. What it meant was this, that in Christianity there was no initiatory rite in which women could not share. Had the view of the Judaizing section prevailed, the distinction between men and women in religion would have been perpetuated, or at the least the religious equality of men and women in the Church would have been seriously imperilled. But now it was clear, as St. Paul told the Galatians, that 'all' might become 'sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus' and by being 'baptized into Christ'; for 'there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female.'

Acts xv. 1

Gal. ii. 4

iii. 26*ff.*

Another rite is mentioned in connexion with the evangelization of Samaria. 'When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent

Acts viii. 14*ff.*

unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost: for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.' It is unnecessary to point out that we are clearly meant to understand that all the converts, 'both men and women,' participated in this rite and received, as members of both sexes had received at Pentecost, the divine gift. This is the only actual record in the New Testament of the 'confirmation' of women. But it is sufficient to indicate the practice of the apostles everywhere. According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 'teaching' of the 'laying on of hands,' as well as that of 'baptisms,' was regarded as part of the 'foundation' of the Christian religion; and the two were closely associated in the apostolic age. Both rites, with the spiritual blessings which they conveyed, were bestowed upon men and women alike.

Heb. vi. 1*f.*

It may be added here that no one can doubt that women also participated in the solemn religious meal which held a central place in the life of the Church from the first. It has already been pointed out that the women disciples and other women must be presumed among those who after Pentecost are described as 'continuing stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.' Women may reasonably be supposed to have been present when the Christians at Troas were 'gathered

Acts ii.

xx. 7*ff.*

together to break bread' with St. Paul. Women must have been among those who assembled at Corinth 'to eat the Lord's supper,' as described by St. Paul in First Corinthians; and it is noteworthy that the apostle passes at once from regulating the dress of women 'praying or prophesying' in the meetings of the church to his directions about the observance of the Agape and the Eucharist. It is obvious that there could have been no distinction of sex on these occasions. The fact that the gatherings took place in private houses would make this impossible. But the Eucharist itself was the great expression of the fellowship and unity of all believers; 'seeing that there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake from the one loaf.'

1 Cor. xi. 17*ff.*

1 Cor. x. 17.

XI.

The Acts contains interesting references to Christian women at two cities of Judaea; Joppa, the port of Jerusalem, and Cæsarea, the capital of the Roman province.

At Joppa there must have been from the first a considerable number of women in the church. For here again, at the time of St. Peter's visitation of the churches of Judaea, we are introduced to a body of Christian widows. It is not quite clear whether, like the widows at Jerusalem, these women were the object of charity or were associated with the 'disciple,' Tabitha, in the 'good works and almsdeeds which she did.'

Acts ix. 36*ff.*

Ramsay thinks that the 'germ' of the later order of widows is to be found here.[1] Except in the 1 Tim. v. 4ff. First Epistle to Timothy, where the widows at Ephesus are the subject of careful regulation, no reference is made to this order in the New Testament. Perhaps we may suppose that the widows at Joppa, in return for their support, devoted themselves to the service of the church under the direction of Tabitha.

Tabitha, or Dorcas, may herself have been a widow. She was one of those women of means and leisure who were to be found in the apostolic Church, and whose ability and willingness to 'minister' to their fellow-Christians accounted for their prominence in the communities to which they belonged. Her work has commonly been regarded as the type of the homeliest work which women can do for the Church. But we need not suppose that her activities were confined to making 'the coats and garments' which the widows displayed after her death. Her house may have been one of those in which a congregation met; and if so there would have been wide scope for her energies. At all events she was a person of considerable importance in the church at Joppa and one whose loss was a matter of the gravest concern. St. Chrysostom remarks that it is not without reason that St. Luke has recorded her name; 'for the name she bore corresponded to her character—as active and wakeful was she as a *dorcas*, or gazelle.'[2]

[1] *Pictures of the Apostolic Church*, 76.

[2] *In Acta Apostolorum Homil.* xxi.

Passing now to Cæsarea, some twenty years later we find St. Philip the evangelist of Samaria settled there, and with him his four daughters, who are described as 'virgins, which did prophesy.' With this family St. Paul and his party, including St. Luke, stayed on their return towards Jerusalem from the 'third missionary journey.' The reference occurs in one of the passages of the Acts in which St. Luke uses the first person and which may almost be regarded as extracts from a diary of his travels. As Mr. Rackham remarks, we seem here to 'recognize the happy reminiscences of a guest.'[1] Acts xxi. 8*f.*

Curiously enough there is an early tradition that St. Philip the apostle also had daughters of some importance in the Church. Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus at the end of the second century, in a fragment preserved by Eusebius, records that Philip, 'one of the twelve apostles,' was buried at Hierapolis and with him 'his two aged virgin daughters'; while a third daughter 'who lived her life in the Holy Spirit rests at Ephesus.' These, he says, were among the 'great lights' of Asia.[2] Eusebius confuses the two Philips; but Bishop Lightfoot has shown that there is no reason for supposing that Polycrates really meant Philip the evangelist.[3] As Dr. Cowan writes, 'the fact of Philip the evangelist having had four virgin daughters who prophesied, does not invalidate the early testimony to

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[1] *Acts, ad loc.*

[2] *Ecclesiastical History,* iii. 31.

[3] *Colossians,* 45*f.*

Philip the apostle having also had notable daughters, although it may have led to confusion on the part of later or less well-informed writers.'[1]

The description of these women as 'virgins' cannot be regarded as evidence of the existence of an 'order' of virgins in the apostolic Church. St. Luke says nothing which can lead us 'to suppose that they did not share the home life of their father, or that they had devoted themselves to God by any special vow.'[2] But we need not doubt that they had remained unmarried from a desire to be free for Christian service and for the exercise of the gift with which they were endowed; and they may have been encouraged in this desire by our Lord's sanction of celibacy 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake,' if indeed we may suppose that the saying was known to them. They felt, as St. Paul had written to the Corinthian Christians some two years before his visit to Cæsarea, that 'she that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit: but she that is married is careful for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.'

1 Cor. vii. 34

Two remarks on this subject may be made here. First, in the words of Dr. Swete, 'no condemnation of marriage, no exclusion of the married from the highest blessings of the Christian life, finds a place in the New Testament.'[3] Both

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1 art. 'Philip,' Hastings' D.B.

2 Knowling *Acts, ad loc.*

3 *Apocalypse*, on xiv. 4.

in the married state and in the unmarried state women may serve God ; and we are not without examples in the apostolic age of wives who with their husbands took a full share in the work of the Church. The preference of St. Paul for celibacy was largely due to the exceptional circumstances of the time in which he lived, and to his belief that the world was soon coming to an end with the Parousia or Advent of the Lord. 'We cannot assume,' as Robertson-Plummer remark, 'that his opinion would have been the same in a more peaceful period, and after experience had proved that the Advent might be long delayed.'[1]

At the same time—and this is the second point—our Lord's approval of a celibate life consecrated to the service of God gave to the unmarried woman a position of independence and of importance which she had never occupied before. 'We must never forget,' writes Dr. Burkitt, 'that Christian asceticism has generally tended towards the equalization of the sexes. The historical opposite to the ascetic ideal was not that in which woman was looked upon as the equal complement of man, but one in which woman was looked upon as the divinely ordained household drudge or the plaything of man.'[2]

The daughters of Philip furnish the only instance recorded in the Acts of the fulfilment of the Pentecostal promise that women should share in the gift of prophecy. There had been inspired

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[1] *First Corinthians*, vii. 26.

[2] *Gospel History and Transmission*, 214*f*.

women in Old Testament days—Miriam, Deborah, Huldah; and as a link between these and the New Testament women we have the 'prophetess' Anna, who 'gave thanks unto God' at the presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple, 'and spake of Him to them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.' In the Spirit-filled Church the gift was for all; but some possessed it in a higher degree than others and devoted their lives to its exercise. These specially inspired persons were called 'prophets'; and their ministry was one of the most important features of the apostolic age.

Lk. ii. 36*ff*

Now in the next verse to that in which the daughters of Philip 'which did prophesy' are mentioned St. Luke speaks of 'a certain prophet named Agabus,' who had come down to Cæsarea to warn St. Paul of the fate which awaited him if he persisted in his intention to go to Jerusalem. Any inclination to distinguish between the man prophet and the woman prophet is forbidden by this juxtaposition. Whatever the one was, the other was; and Conybeare-Howson think it is not improbable that Philip's daughters had also given the apostle 'some intimation of the sorrows which were hanging over him.'[1] Indeed it has been conjectured that the whole passage about Agabus is an interpolation; and it is certainly surprising to find him introduced here as though he had not been mentioned before, while in an earlier chapter he is said to have predicted at Antioch the 'great

Acts xi. 27*ff*

[1] *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 239.

famine over all the world.' According to those who make this suggestion, it was the daughters of Philip who prophesied St. Paul's arrest at Jerusalem; and at a later time when the prophetic ministry of women was not approved, the text of the Acts was altered, and the prophecy was put into the mouth of Agabus.[1] Whether this be so or not, there is no reason to suppose that the gift with which Agabus was endowed differed from that which the daughters of Philip possessed.

But prediction of this kind was not the chief function of the prophets. Their main work was exhortation and instruction. They were the 'preachers' of the early Church. 'He that prophesieth,' says St. Paul, 'speaketh unto men edification, and comfort, and consolation.' And because 'he that prophesieth edifieth the Church,' and not himself only, the apostle places prophecy first among the spiritual gifts which he would have his converts 'earnestly desire.' We hear of women 'praying' and 'prophesying' as a matter of course in the Christian assemblies at Corinth. It is extremely probable that a congregation met in Philip's house in Cæsarea, and that in the meetings of this 'house-church' in their own home the four virgin daughters exercised the gift which had been bestowed upon them.

1 Cor. xiv. 3

xi. 5

Harnack believes that the portions of the Acts relating to Samaria and Cæsarea may be traced to Philip and his daughters. He points to the prominence of prophcy and to the 'feminine

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[1] art. 'Philip,' *Encyclopædia Biblica.*

element ' in these passages as evidence for his theory.[1] It is interesting to find in Eusebius that Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in the first part of the second century, received information about the early days of the Church from ' the daughters of Philip ' ; but owing to the confusion between the apostle and evanglist the reference is uncertain.[2]

XII.

At two cities of Syria also Christian women are met with in the Acts ; Damascus, the ancient capital, and Tyre, the famous seaport.

Acts ix. 1*f.* At Damascus women were among the intended victims of the persecuting fury of Saul of Tarsus, as they were among his actual victims at Jerusalem. ' Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.'

Some of these Christians, whom Saul pursued, may have been refugees from Jerusalem. But Damascus had a Christian community of its own, of which the ' disciple ' Ananias was evidently the head. Jews were numerous in the city ; and we now know that a reforming sect called the Sons of Zadok had settled there.[3] The teaching

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1 *Luke the Physician*, 153*ff*; *Acts*, 191*f*.

2 *Ecclesiastical History*, iii. 39.

3 Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, ii. 785, 792.

of this sect may well have prepared the way for the Gospel. Jewish propaganda had been successful in Damascus, especially among the women. Josephus tells us that 'almost all' the wives of the men of the city 'were addicted to the Jewish religion.'[1] He no doubt means that they belonged to the class of persons described in the Acts as those who 'feared,' or those who 'worshipped,' God, the latter term being sometimes translated 'devout.'

The 'God-fearers' were not proselytes but heathen who had been attracted to Judaism and were to some extent attached to the synagogues. They were to be found everywhere; and it is important to realize how enormously their existence helped in the furtherance of the Church. They were the most hopeful seed-plot for the Gospel; and among them the most frequent conversions to Christianity were made. As Dr. Kirsopp Lake remarks, 'the history of the progress of Christianity in the empire soon became that of the conversion of God-fearers.'[2]

Now many of the 'God-fearers' were women. In spite of the low position in religion accorded to women by the Jewish teachers, the monotheism and ethics of the Jews seem to have made everywhere a strong appeal to the more earnest Gentile women. Evidence of this is to be found not only in Josephus, but in classical writers like Strabo[3] and Juvenal.[4] 'As in the case of every religious

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[1] *Jewish War*, ii. xx. 20.
[2] *Stewardship of Faith*, 77.
[3] vii. 2.
[4] vi. 543.

movement,' says Schürer, ' so also in the case of Jewish propagandism, it was found that the female heart was most impressionable.'[1]

Acts xiii. 50

At Antioch of Pisidia it was these ' God-fearing ' women whom the Jews ' urged on,' with ' the chief men of the city,' and ' stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders.' They are described by St. Luke as ' the devout women of honourable estate.' The influence thus assigned to the women of Antioch is in accordance with what we know of the position of women in Asia Minor at the time ; and the power which they were able to exert against Christianity is an indication of the assistance which women could render to the cause when they were enlisted on its side. Their antagonism was probably quite exceptional. As a matter of fact many of the women ' God-fearers ' became Christians, finding in the Gospel that for which they had been seeking in Judaism.

There can be little doubt that this is what had taken place at Damascus. The special mention of the women in connexion with the projected persecution suggests that it had become known that there was a considerable body of Christian women in the city. These women may be supposed to have been adherents of the synagogue who had transferred their allegiance from it to the Church when Christianity was preached. Nothing could be more likely than

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[1] *Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, ii. ii. 308.

that the anger of the Jews should be aroused by this defection of persons whose conversion to their religion seemed almost to be accomplished.

The same may be said of Antioch in Syria. No direct mention of Christian women in that city is made in the Acts. But Josephus bears witness again to the success of Jewish propaganda. The Jews, he says, 'made proselytes of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby, after a sort, brought them to be a portion of their own body.'[1] It was among these persons that the converts to Christianity were made, when the Gospel was first preached by the 'men of Cyprus and Cyrene.' For almost certainly the correct reading in Acts xi. 20, is not 'Grecians,' *i.e.* Greek-speaking Jews, or Hellenists, but 'Greeks.' And as many of these 'God-fearing' Greeks must have been women, we may reasonably suppose that women were included in 'the great number' who believed and again in the 'much people' who were 'added unto the Lord' after the arrival of St. Barnabas. Acts xi. 19ff.

Turning now to St. Luke's reference to Christian women at Tyre, we find that the ship in which St. Paul and his companions sailed from Patara at the close of the 'third missionary journey' touched at this port 'to unlade her burden.' The travellers sought out 'the disciples' who were in the city and remained with them seven days. Then, says St. Luke, 'they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way, till we were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach Acts xxi. 3ff.

[1] *Jewish War*, vii. iii. 3.

we prayed, and bade each other farewell; and we went on board the ship, but they returned home again.' Sir William Ramsay writes: 'the hearty welcome which they received from strangers whose sole bond of union lay in their common religion, makes Luke dwell on this scene as showing the solidarity of feeling in the Church.'[1] And although the mention of the wives is merely incidental, it would seem to suggest the full share which women took in the Church's life.

XIII.

We come now to the extension of the Church to Asia Minor and to Europe as recorded in the latter half of the Acts and as illustrated by St. Paul's Epistles. We shall see that the conversion of women was a striking feature of the apostle's work, and that the co-operation of women with him was one of the most important factors in the spread of Christianity.

In St. Luke's account of the founding of the churches of Galatia there is no direct mention of women converts. But on his second visit to Lystra St. Paul apparently meets with the mother of Timothy, 'a Jewess which believed.' This woman's conversion may be presumed to have taken place at the time of the apostle's first visit some seven years before. One of the cursive manuscripts[2] adds that she was 'a widow'; and this may be supported by the tense of the verb

Acts xvi. 1*ff.*

[1] *St. Paul the Traveller*, 300. [2] 25.

in the statement about her husband, a possible translation of which is 'he had been a Greek.' Perhaps we are to understand that he was a heathen, or more probably a 'God-fearer.' At any rate Timothy had not been circumcised. In the Second Epistle to Timothy his mother is named Eunice; and his grandmother Lois, no doubt the mother of Eunice, is also mentioned. 2 Tim. i. 5

It would seem that the boy had been brought up by these two women, who had instructed him to the best of their ability in the Old Testament scriptures. 'From a babe' he 'had known the sacred writings'; a reference perhaps to the little parchment rolls used for teaching children. 'From their first consciousness,' as Josephus says,[1] or, as Philo puts it, 'from their swaddling clothes,'[2] Jewish boys were to be taught the Law. This was the duty of fathers. It was exceptional when mothers were able to share in it. But Lois and Eunice were unusual women and filled in this respect the place which Timothy's father would have taken, had he been a Jew and alive. When they became Christians 'unfeigned faith dwelt in them'; and long afterwards their bright example was recalled to Timothy's mind. iii. 15

Mr. Rackham suggests that when St. Paul first visited Lystra he found hospitality in the house of Eunice, and that he lodged with her also on his return.[3] It is not improbable that she was one of those women who were able and willing to place their house at the disposal of the church.

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1 *Apion*, ii. 18. 2 *Legat. ad Caium*, 31. 3 *Acts*, 230, 262.

Timothy had no doubt been converted at the same time as his mother and grandmother. That he was a personal convert of the apostle we know from the references to him as his ' child.' During St. Paul's absence he had become an active worker in the church and ' was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.' Now, when St. Paul ' would have him go forth with him ' on his missionary journeys, his mother willingly gave him up, as Mary of Jerusalem had surrendered her son John Mark to the cause. In estimating the extent of the co-operation of women in the work of the apostolic Church, the sacrifice of these and other mothers of missionaries must not be forgotten.

1 Cor. iv. 17, etc.

At Iconium ' a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed.' By ' Greeks ' St. Luke almost certainly means ' God-fearers ' ; and after what has been already said, we shall have no hesitation in supposing that this large number of converts included many women. But, if the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* can be relied upon, the supposition is confirmed. According to this story, St. Paul lodged at Iconium with a man named Onesiphorus and Lectra his wife. Thecla, who belonged to one of the noblest families in the city, could hear him preaching in this house from a window in the house of her mother. She was much impressed and became devoted to the apostle, determining to remain a virgin although already betrothed to an aristocratic youth named Thamyris. St. Paul was arrested and imprisoned. When it was found that Thecla had visited him in prison, he was

Acts xiv. 1

scourged and expelled. Thecla was condemned to be burnt, but was saved by a fall of rain. She followed the apostle to Antioch, where she incurred the wrath of the high priest. After a miraculous escape from the wild beasts in the amphitheatre she was finally rescued by Tryphaena who had been queen of Pontus. She retired to Seleucia, preached the word, and lived to an advanced age. Ramsay and other scholars believe that the story is founded upon fact.[1] We are concerned here, however, only with the corroboration which it affords of the evidence in the Acts regarding the attraction of Christianity for women. For Thecla was not the only woman to whom the apostle's preaching appealed. From her window 'she saw many women going in' to the house in which he taught; and her lover declared that 'all the women and young people' were going after St. Paul.

Assuming the South Galatian destination of the Epistle to the Galatians, it is interesting to note that it was in his letter to these churches that St. Paul declared in emphatic terms the spiritual equality of men and women. We have already alluded to his words. They may be quoted here in full: 'Ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus.' Gal. iii. 26*ff.*

[1] *Church in the Roman Empire*, 375*ff.*

Bishop Lightfoot's paraphrase may be added: 'In Christ ye are all sons, all free. Every barrier is swept away. No special claims, no special disabilities, exist in Him, none *can* exist. The conventional distinctions of religious caste or of social rank, even the natural distinction of sex, are banished hence. One heart beats in all: one mind guides all: one life is lived by all. Ye are all *one man*, for ye are members of Christ.'[1]

We have seen that the terms 'disciples,' 'brethren,' 'saints,' though masculine in form, are applied in the New Testament to Christians irrespectively of sex. Here it is evident that even the term 'sons of God' is similarly used of both men and women. Reference to 'sons and daughters' of God is found only in the combined quotations in 2 Corinthians vi. 18.

Ramsay adduces this passage in support of the theory that the Epistle to the Galatians was intended for the South Galatian cities. We have referred to the influence which women could exert at one of these, namely Antioch of Pisidia; the story of Thecla at Iconium points to a similar independence of action. It is clear, as Ramsay remarks, that in this district 'the position of women was unusually high and important.' Moreover, there is evidence that 'they were often entrusted with offices and duties which elsewhere were denied them. Hence the allusion to the equality of the sexes in the perfect form which the Church must ultimately attain would not

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[1] *Galatians, ad loc.*

seem to the people of these Graeco-Phrygian cities to be so entirely revolutionary and destructive of existing social conditions as it must have seemed to the Greeks.'[1]

XIV.

It was at the call of 'a man of Macedonia' whom he had seen in a vision that St. Paul first set foot in Europe as a missionary. But his first convert in Europe was a woman 'of the city of Thyatira,' in Asia, 'one that worshipped God,' *i.e.* a 'God-fearer.' Acts xvi. 9*ff.*

'Setting sail from Troas,' the apostle and his companions landed at Neapolis and made their way to Philippi. There were few Jews in Philippi, and there was no synagogue. But, according to Jewish custom, there was 'by a river side,' the river Gangites, a *proseucha*, or 'place of prayer.' Thither the missionaries went on the first sabbath after their arrival in the city and there they found some women 'which were come together.' Most of these women were probably 'God-fearers'; and their leader was 'a seller of purple,' who was known by her trade-name of Lydia. Mr. Baring Gould asserts that St. Paul was 'a little discouraged' when he discovered that the congregation consisted of women only.[2] But like many

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[1] *Historical Commentary on Galatians*, 387*ff.*

[2] *A Study of St. Paul*, 213.

other statements of this writer with reference to the mission at Philippi the remark is without foundation.

To these women St. Paul preached the Gospel as freely and as fully as he would have preached it to men, with the result that ' the Lord opened ' Lydia's heart ' to give heed to the things that were spoken.' In her native city, Thyatira, there was a Jewish colony, and perhaps she had become a ' God-fearer ' at home before settling at Philippi as the agent of a firm of Thyatiran dyers. Now, like many other women ' God-fearers,' she welcomed the message of Christianity on its first presentation to her ; and she ' and her household ' were admitted to the Church by baptism.

St. Chrysostom is wrong in assuming from Lydia's business that she was a woman of humble position.[1] On the contrary her business was one which would require considerable capital ; and she must have been a woman of means. This is evident also from the mention of her ' household ' and from her ability to offer hospitality to St. Paul and his companions. As her husband is not referred to, it seems probable that she was a widow. She may be taken, as Ramsay has said, ' as an ordinary example of the freedom with which women lived and worked both in Asia Minor and in Macedonia ' in the first century.[2]

The case of Lydia is a good illustration of what has been said regarding the special opportunity

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[1] *In Acta Apostolorum Homil.* xxxv.

[2] *St. Paul the Traveller*, 214.

for service which the domestic character of early Christianity afforded to women. She not only 'constrained' the missionaries to stay at her house, but she gathered round her in her house the other converts, among whom we must include the slave girl, the *python*, or ventriloquist, whose deliverance from 'the spirit of divination' brought about the arrest and imprisonment of St. Paul and St. Silas. On their release from prison they went to her house and there they saw 'the brethren' before departing from Philippi. According to Codex Bezae they 'related what things the Lord had done for them.' It is evident that Lydia's household and friends had become a 'house-church.' She herself, as the head of the household, and as the first convert, occupied the position of leader. She was the 'mother' of the infant community, the first church founded by St. Paul in Europe.

Some ten years later, in the church which thus originated with women, women continued to hold a prominent place.

Writing to the Philippian Christians St. Paul appeals to two women, Euodia and Syntyche, to 'be of the same mind in the Lord'; and he asks a man whom he calls 'true yokefellow' to 'help these women, for they laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.' Phil. iv. 2f.

Setting aside any symbolical interpretation of the names, it is clear that here was not merely a

private quarrel but a difference of opinion between two persons whose disagreement was a serious matter for the whole community, and which may
Phil. ii. 14 have been one cause of the 'murmurings and disputings' at Philippi. St. Chrysostom says: 'these women seem to me to have been the head of the church that was there';[1] and they may well have been leaders of congregations which met in their houses. If so, it is not improbable that the controversy which they are bidden to lay aside was in connexion with the teaching which was given at the meetings of their 'house-churches.' Dean Howson thought it 'quite possible' that they are included among the persons called 'deacons' or 'ministers' in the opening words of the Epistle.[2] It is by no means certain that the reference here is to an official diaconate. The term, as has been said, is applied in the New Testament to every kind of Christian service. That St. Paul used it to describe the work of women as well as that of men is proved by his allusion to Phoebe in Romans xvi. 1.

There have been many speculations as to who the 'true yokefellow' was. Barnabas, Silas, Epaphroditus, and Timothy have been suggested; while Ramsay thinks he may have been St. Luke. If any one of these suppositions is correct, the meaning is that the man was a 'yoke-fellow' of the apostle's, one who shared with him the service of the Master. It is however possible that the meaning is a 'yokefellow' of one of the

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1 *In Ep. ad Philipp. Homil.* xiii. 2 *Deaconesses*, 58n.

women, *i.e.* her husband. This is how St. Chrysostom understands the term. On the other hand the word may be a proper name, Synzygus. Weizsäcker thinks that all three names may have been 'adopted by their bearers after they had become Christians.'[1] It has perhaps been too readily assumed that the 'help' to be given to Euodia and Syntyche was concerned only with their reconciliation. It may refer quite generally to assistance in their work for the church.

St. Paul's description of these women deserves special attention. They were his 'fellow-workers,' a term which he applies in his epistles to a number of men and also to Prisca. It cannot mean anything less than that Euodia and Syntyche had actively assisted the apostle in the founding of the church. They 'may have belonged,' as Bishop Lightfoot suggests, 'to the company of women to whom the Gospel was first preached at Philippi.'[2] Having received the message themselves, they proceeded to carry it to others.

But St. Paul says also that they 'laboured' with him. The term is a very strong one. The compound verb is found in the New Testament again only in the first chapter of Philippians, Phil. i. 27 where the apostle bids all the Christians to 'stand fast in one spirit with one soul striving (together) for the faith of the Gospel.' The cognate noun is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews of the 'great conflict of sufferings' endured by Heb. x. 32 the Christians in persecution; and the simple

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[1] *Apostolic Age*, i. 282. [2] *Philippians, ad loc.*

verb occurs in 2 Timothy ii. 5, with the meaning of engaging in an athletic contest. As applied to the Philippian women, it suggests strenuous effort, devoted and courageous work, side by side with the apostle. Haupt translates it 'fellow-combatants';[1] and Bishop Lightfoot paraphrases it 'how zealously they seconded my efforts.'[2] Euodia and Syntyche had 'struggled like athletes,' straining, as we say, every nerve to accomplish their purpose. St. Paul had other 'fellow-workers,' as Oecumenius remarks, 'but only these women *laboured* with him.'[3]

The phrase 'in the Gospel' can have but one meaning. When St. Paul, for example, in the
Rom. i. 9 Epistle to the Romans, says that he serves God in his spirit 'in the Gospel of His Son,' no one can doubt that he is referring to the proclamation of
1 Thess. iii. 2 the Gospel. Similarly, when he describes Timothy in First Thessalonians as 'God's minister,' or according to another reading, 'God's fellow-worker, in the Gospel of Christ,' it is obvious that the reference is to Timothy's work as an evangelist. This must be the meaning here. It was in the preaching of the Gospel that Euodia and Syntyche had 'laboured with' the apostle.

A desire to find Lydia mentioned in the Epistle to the Philippians has led to the idea that she is to be identified with one of these women, her personal name being used here instead of her trade name as in the Acts. But this is entirely

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1 *Commentary, ad loc.* 2 loc. cit.
3 *Commentary, ad loc.*

conjectural. It is worthy of note, however, that St. Paul refers to the financial help which the church at Philippi was able to give him. 'In the beginning of the Gospel,' he says, 'when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my needs.' It is not improbable that these contributions came from Lydia and from other women of means. If so, we have an indication of another important way in which women co-operated with the apostle in the work of the Church. They supplied his material needs, as the women disciples of the Gospels had supplied the material needs of our Lord and the Twelve.

Phil. iv. 15*f.*

XV.

At two other cities of Macedonia women of position were among St. Paul's first converts.

At Thessalonica 'some' Jews 'were persuaded and consorted with Paul and Silas,' or rather, 'were allotted to them' by God. But the majority of the converts were 'devout Greeks,' or 'God-fearers.' Of these 'a great multitude' joined the Church, 'and of the chief women not a few.' Dr. Hort thought that by 'the chief women' we were to understand 'Jewish wives of heathen men of distinction';[1] but it is more likely that they are to be numbered among the 'God-

Acts xvii. 4

[1] *Judaistic Christianity*, 89.

fearers.' They were Macedonian women whose interest in Judaism had prepared the way for their response to the preaching of the Gospel. None of these women are mentioned by name in the Acts or in the Epistles to the Thessalonians. But it may be supposed that at Thessalonica, as at Philippi, women had a large share in the building up of the church.

The Epistles, says Dr. Milligan, ' enable us to picture ' St. Paul ' during those long hours of toil for his daily support, to which fear of being burdensome to others had driven him, gathering round him little companies of anxious inquirers, and with the authority of a father, and the tenderness of a mother, dealing with their individual needs.'[1] And it is worth while to point out
1 Thess. i. 1 that when St. Paul writes, after ' a short season ' of separation, to ' the church of the Thessalonians,' he must include in this term the women who were among his most conspicuous converts. It is indeed to the whole community without distinction of sex that the Epistles are addressed ; and if in one passage the apostle bids the Christ-
v. 12ff. ians ' know them that labour among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you,' and tells them ' to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake,' he makes it clear that a similar responsibility of service rests upon all the members of the church. ' But we exhort you, brethren,' he says, ' admonish the disorderly, encourage the faintthearted, support the weak, be

[1] *Thessalonians*, xlv.

longsuffering to all.' As Dr. Hort has said, the services of the leaders 'were not essentially different from services which members of the Ecclesia, simply as brethren, were to render to each other. *They* too were to admonish the disorderly, as also to do the converse work of encouraging the feebleminded. *They* too were to make the cause of the weak their own, to sustain them, which is at least one side, if not more, of the 'helpful leadership' of the Elders; as well as to shew longsuffering to all.'[1] And it cannot be doubted that 'the chief women' of Thessalonica who had been admitted to the full privileges of church membership were meant also to bear the full responsibilities which church membership brought. They would be in the congregation to which these words were read; for St. Paul closes the Epistle with the injunction 'I adjure you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the brethren.' v. 27

It is in First Thessalonians, the earliest of St. Paul's extant Epistles, that we hear first of the 'holy kiss.' 'Salute all the brethren,' says the apostle, 'with a holy kiss.' A similar exhortation is to be found at the close of the Epistle to the Romans and at the close of both the Corinthian Epistles. St. Peter also bids the readers of his 'First' Epistle to 'salute one another with a kiss of love.' The kiss was an important feature of the assemblies of the primitive Christians. If, as Mr. Conybeare thinks, it was 'a formal institution

Rom. xvi. 16, 1 Cor. xvi. 20, 2 Cor. xiii. 12, 1 Pet. v. 14.

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[1] *Christian Ecclesia*, 127*f*.

of the Jewish synagogue,' it was probably not shared by men and women.[1] But as the writer of the article on this subject in the *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* points out, 'in the frequent allusions to the kiss of peace which occur in the early Christian worship, there is no reference to any restriction, while the cautions and admonitions we meet with as to its profanation and abuse plainly indicate the indiscriminate character of the salutation.' There can be little doubt therefore that in the apostolic age the kiss was given promiscuously, without distinction of class or of sex, among those who were united in Christ. It was, in the words of Dr. James Donaldson, 'indicative of the strong bond of brotherhood which bound Christian brothers and sisters to each other.'[2] It expressed the complete spiritual equality of men and women.

Acts xvii. 12 At Beroea also many of the leading women joined the church. It is noteworthy that St. Luke mentions them in this case before the men. 'Many' Jews 'believed; also of the Greek women of honourable estate, and of men, not a few.'

Perhaps, as Dr. Knowling remarks, the fact that in both these cities the converts 'were the leading high-born women intimates that the poorer women would follow the men of the lower orders.'[3] Or, as Ramsay says, 'men of all classes

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1 *Expositor*, iv. ix. 460*f*.
2 *Woman: Her Position, etc.*, 172*f*.
3 *Acts, ad loc.*

were impressed by the preaching of Paul, but only women of the leading families ; and the difference is obviously due to the fact that the poorer women were most likely to be under the sway of superstition.'[1]

Codex Bezae has altered the text in both these passages ; and the changes must be accounted for by the later dislike to the prominence of women in the apostolic Church to which we have already referred. ' The chief women ' at Thessalonica become ' the wives of the chief men ' ; and the men come before the women at Beroea : ' of the Greeks and of those of honourable estate, men and women not a few.'

The special mention of women in the three churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea, accords with what we know of the position of women in Macedonia at the time. Bishop Lightfoot pointed out that as regards the women St. Paul's work ' was made easier by the national feelings and usages ' which prevailed. ' The extant Macedonian inscriptions,' he says, ' seem to assign to the sex a higher social influence than is common among the civilised nations of antiquity. In not a few instances a metronymic takes the place of the usual patronymic ; and in other cases a prominence is given to women which can hardly be accidental.'[2]

A recognition of the comparatively high position of women in Macedonia and also in Asia Minor in the first century forbids us to make the

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[1] *St. Paul the Traveller*, 229. [2] *Philippians*, 56.

exaggerated claim that progress in this direction was everywhere entirely due to the introduction of Christianity. But it helps us to see that where women had already a position of influence in social life they were accorded a similar place in the Church. As in the case of slavery, Christianity nowhere effected a revolution at once ; but where it found that favourable conditions existed it encouraged them and took advantage of them, while at the least it modified the most unfavourable conditions by its proclamation of the equality of the sexes in religion.

Acts xvii. 34 One of the first converts in Athens also was a woman. Here St. Paul's success was small ; ' but certain men clave unto him, and believed : among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.'

The name Damaris is perhaps a corruption of Damalis, which it is interesting to know is found on inscriptions as the name of several Athenian women, while the former is unknown.[1] Unlike the women of the Macedonian cities, the women of Athens, *i.e.* the wives of the citizens, lived a restricted and secluded life. They were without education, were married early, and nothing more was expected of them than that they should be faithful to their husbands and good mothers of their children. It is extremely unlikely that any of these should have been among St. Paul's hearers on the Areopagus. But there was another class of women in Athens, who enjoyed consider-

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1 Moulton-Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament.*

able freedom. These were the foreign women, with one or more of whom every citizen had an alliance. They were called *hetairai*, or 'companions'; and no shame attached to any connexion between married or single men and these courtezans. 'They were,' says Dr. Donaldson, 'the only educated women in Athens. They studied all the arts, became acquainted with all new philosophical speculations, and interested themselves in politics. Women who thus cultivated their minds were sure to gain the esteem of the best men in Greece. Many of them also were women of high moral character, temperate, thoughtful, and earnest.'[1] It is quite probable that some of these women listened to the preaching of St. Paul; and Ramsay has suggested that Damaris was one of them.[2]

Codex Bezae, in accordance with the desire displayed by this manuscript to minimize the importance of women in the apostolic Church, omits all mention of Damaris. But curiously enough it gives the title of 'honourable' to Dionysius. In the Acts this adjective is applied only to women, to the 'devout' women of Antioch in Pisidia, who opposed St. Paul, and to the women converts at Beroea. It is possible, therefore, that in this passage it originally belonged to Damaris; and when her name was dropped it was transferred to Dionysius.[3] If this were so, it would support the idea that Damaris was a woman

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1 *Woman*, 58. 2 *St. Paul the Traveller*, 252.
3 Ramsay, *Church in Roman Empire*, 161.

of some importance ; and except on this supposition it is perhaps difficult to see why she should have been mentioned with a member of the council. St. Chrysostom conjectured that she was the wife of Dionysius,[1] and she is so described in the Latin of one of the uncial manuscripts.[2] But St. Luke's language excludes the suggestion. It is more probable that she is specially mentioned in the Acts, because owing to her social position she became a promnent member of the church at Athens. As Dr. Adeney remarks, ' it must be for the sake of her subsequent influence that she is singled out.'[3]

XVI.

From Athens St. Paul went on to Corinth. Here he made the acquaintance of another woman who became closely associated with him in his work.

Acts xviii. 2*ff.* ' He found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome : and he came unto them ; and because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought ; for by their trade they were tentmakers.' ' Priscilla ' is the diminutive of ' Prisca,' and is the form of the name which is more familiar to

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1 *De Sacerdotio*, iv. 7. 2 E.
3 *Women of the New Testament*, 229.

English readers of the New Testament; the reason being that in the six passages in which Aquila and his wife are mentioned the Authorised Version has 'Prisca' only in 2 Timothy iv. 19. In the Revised Version, however, the better attested reading in the Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians has been followed, with the result that we find that St. Luke in the Acts always speaks of 'Priscilla,' while St. Paul prefers the more formal 'Prisca.' Rom. xvi. 3, 1 Cor. xvi. 19

Twice in the Acts and twice in the Epistles the wife's name comes first. This unusual order has been accounted for by the supposition that Prisca was of a higher social standing than her husband. There are some grounds for the supposition, among them being the fact that the name is found among the names of the women of a distinguished Roman family, the Acilian *gens*. But it is difficult to believe that a member of this family would have married a Jewish artizan and would have worked at his trade. It is more probable that Prisca was a freedwoman, who according to custom bore one of the names of the household to which she belonged. A better explanation of the precedence given to her name is that she was, as St. Chrysostom suggests, the 'more faithful and zealous,'[1] and took a more prominent position in the Church than her husband. Once more Codex Bezae reveals the dislike of the important place occupied by Christian women in apostolic times which pre-

[1] *In Ep. ad Tim. II. Homil.* x.

vailed in the later Church by changing the order of the name in Acts xviii. 18, 26.

St. Luke carefully describes Aquila as a Jew, but does not tell us whether Prisca was a Jewess or a Gentile. Women at Rome as elsewhere were often attracted to Judaism ; and she may very well have been a ' God-fearer.' No mention is made of her conversion to Christianity or of that of her husband ; and perhaps they had become Christians before their arrival in Corinth and their acquaintance with St. Paul. The imperial edict to which St. Luke refers was directed, as we know from Suetonius,[1] against disturbances in Rome of a Messianic character, and both Jews and Christians would be affected by it.

With this couple St. Paul lodged at Corinth. He seems to have remained with them during
Acts xviii. 7 his prolonged stay in the city ; for his ' departure ' to the house of Titus Jastus, after the rejection of his message by the Jews, was not a change of residence, as Codex Bezae suggests, but a transference of the Christians' meeting place from the synagogue. The three worked together at tentmaking, a circumstance which is specially interesting in view of the later description of Aquila and Prisca by the
Rom xvi. 3 apostle as his ' fellow-workers in Christ Jesus.' The term ' fellow-worker,' as Professor Deissmann remarks, ' is a name borrowed from the workshop ';[2] and soon as truly as they had co-operated with him in a commercial relationship husband

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1 *Claudius*, 25. 2 *St. Paul*, 213.

and wife were labouring with St. Paul in the cause of the Church. The undoubted success of the mission at Corinth among the women of the city may have been due in no small measure to the efforts of Prisca.

When St. Paul left Corinth for Syria, Prisca and Aquila accompanied him as far as to Ephesus. Here they remained after he had sailed again to Cæsarea. The apostle returned to Ephesus in the following year; and it is natural to suppose that he stayed again in his friends' house. From Ephesus he wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and at the close of the letter he sent the following greeting: 'Aquila and Prisca salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.' Some manuscripts[1] insert after the names the words 'with whom I am lodging.' Thus it is by no means improbable that the Epistle which deals most fully with questions relating to women was written in Prisca's house.

Acts xviii. 18 *f*

xix. 1

1 Cor. xvi. 19

In the meantime Aquila and Prisca had met at Ephesus 'a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, a learned man . . . mighty in the scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John; and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.'

Acts xviii. 24 *ff*.

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[1] D, E, F, G.

The order of the names in this passage certainly suggests that Prisca took the leading part in the instruction of Apollos. St. Chrysostom makes this inference more than once, reconciling the case of Prisca with the prohibition in 1 Timothy ii. 12, 'I permit not a woman to teach,' by explaining that it is only public teaching by women which is forbidden.[1] That a woman should join with her husband in attempting such a task would have been remarkable enough; but if it was Prisca and not Aquila who was mainly concerned in the teaching of the gifted Alexandrian, we must suppose not only that she was a woman of some education, but that she was like Euodia and Syntyche at Philippi a recognized evangelist. Harnack indeed claims for her the title of an 'apostle.'[2]

It is evident from the salutation at the close of First Corinthians already quoted that during St. Paul's absence from Ephesus Prisca and her husband had gathered round them a band of Christians who met for worship and edification at their house. A reference to a 'house-church,' of which they were the joint leaders, is made again in Romans xvi, where St. Paul writes, 'salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also the churches of the Gentiles: and *salute* the church that is in their house.' Assuming that this chapter is an integral part of the Epistle to the

Rom. xvi. 3ff.

[1] *In illud Salutate Priscillam et Aquilam, Sermo,* i.

[2] *Mission and Expansion,* ii. 66.

Romans, we must suppose that before the Epistle was written by St. Paul during his second (recorded) visit to Corinth, Prisca and Aquila had returned to Rome and had established there a congregation similar to that over which they had presided at Ephesus.

But there is no evidence in the Acts for their settling again in Rome ; and in 2 Timothy iv. 19, greetings are sent to them at Ephesus. Many scholars, therefore, find it difficult to believe that ' Aquila and Prisca left their settled home in Ephesus soon after St. Paul had written First Corinthians, that a year later their house in Rome was the centre of a church, and that they later on returned to Ephesus, and once more took up the same position in the Christian community.'[1] Upon this ground, and upon other grounds which cannot be discussed here, the view has been very widely taken that Romans xvi., or rather the first section of it (verses 1-21, or perhaps 1-23), was no part of the original Epistle, but was a letter of commendation for Phoebe addressed by the apostle to the church at Ephesus, becoming attached at a later time in order to ensure its preservation. It was formerly maintained that the occurrence of the personal names in this section on inscriptions at Rome supported the traditional view ; but it is now known that ' the names referred to are found swarming in inscriptions, papyri, and ostraca all over the Mediterranean world.'[2] If we assume the Ephesian destination, the number of

[1] Lake, *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, 329.

[2] Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 278.

salutations to women would seem to be evidence that at Ephesus as well as at Corinth Prisca had been able powerfully to influence members of her own sex. It may be noted that Timothy is among those who send a greeting in Romans xvi. 21. Prisca and Aquila had made his acquaintance at Corinth, when as St. Luke records in Acts xviii. 5 Silas and he 'came down from Macedonia'; and Acts xix. 22 suggests that he had been with St. Paul at Ephesus.

We do not know to what incident St. Paul is referring when he says that Prisca and Aquila had 'laid down their necks' for his 'life.' But an interesting light has been thrown upon the phrase by Professor Deissmann, who tells us of a similar phrase in a roll recovered from the ruins of Herculaneum. The roll contains the biography of the Epicurean Philonides, who flourished about 175-150 B.C.; and in it the following sentence occurs: 'for the most beloved of his relatives or friends he would readily stake his neck.' Deissmann compares this expression to our phrase 'to go through fire and water for somebody,' and remarks that 'it must certainly have been an unusually great sacrifice of the personal kind which Aquila and Priscilla had dared for St. Paul. We may adopt the words of the pagan roll that was buried under the lava of Vesuvius some twenty years after the Epistle to the Romans was written, and say that it was something that one would dare only 'for the most beloved of one's relatives or friends."[1] Clearly it was something of great

[1] *op. cit.* 119*f.*

importance which had become widely known and appreciated ; for not only the apostle but ' the churches of the Gentiles ' were grateful to Prisca and Aquila for their action. They had shown the martyr spirit ; and their devotion to St. Paul was honoured far beyond the limits of their own congregation.

The order of the names in this salutation again suggests that Prisca was the more conspicuous and the more celebrated of the two. Certainly she has always held a high place in the estimation of the Church. St. Chrysostom, for example, is full of admiration for her character and work. He contrasts her fame with the oblivion into which empresses have fallen, and declares that ' as the sun looks over the whole earth, so the glory of this woman overruns the world.'[1] At all events she and her husband are an example of the co-operation of a married couple in Christian service where the personality of the woman was not sunk in that of the man, and where the wife was free to develope and to exercise her own peculiar gifts for the benefit of her brethren.

Harnack has made the interesting suggestion that to Aquila and Prisca, and chiefly to Prisca, may be ascribed the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews ;[2] and some English scholars have accepted his theory. It is said that traces of a dual authorship may be found in the use of the first person plural side by side with the singular

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[1] *In Ep. ad Rom, Homil.* xxx.

[2] Preuschen's *Zeitschrift*, 16*ff.*

in chapter xiii. 18, where the 'we' cannot be editorial, nor intended to include writer and readers, and also in the phrase 'our brother Timothy' in verse 23, which in Greek probably means 'our colleague.'

The writer of the Epistle was evidently a person of some culture who was closely associated with St. Paul and also with Timothy; and Prisca, as we have seen, would answer to this description. Harnack had hinted that the allusions to women among the heroes of faith in chapter xi.—Sarah, Rahab, and the women who 'received their dead by a resurrection' (the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite)—may possibly be regarded as evidence of a woman writer. Dr. Rendel Harris has shown from a comparison of a similar passage in the Epistle of Clement that women, and particularly Judith, may be referred to in verse 34; and he thinks that Esther also may be alluded to.[1] Finally, the loss of the author's name is adduced in support of the hypothesis. In view of the later dislike to women as teachers the disappearance would be natural if Prisca were the writer.

Against this theory it has been urged that a woman could not have omitted Deborah in chapter xi., and also that the participle in xi. 32, translated 'if I tell of,' is masculine. It must be added that, if as is generally supposed, the Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to a 'house-church' in Rome, this is an argument in

[1] *Sidelights on New Testament Research*, 148*ff*.

favour of the Priscan authorship only on the assumption that Romans xvi. 3-5 was part of the Epistle to the Romans.

XVII.

No direct reference to the conversion of women at Corinth is made in the Acts. But we are told that ' many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized ' ; and women must have been included in this number. Acts xviii, 8

Nor with one possible exception are any Christian women of Corinth mentioned by name in the Epistles to the Corinthians. The exception is Chloe, from whose ' people ' or ' household ' St. Paul at Ephesus had heard of the ' contentions ' in the church. It is natural to suppose, with Bishop Lightfoot[1] and others, that this woman was a Christian ; and perhaps we are to understand that the persons connected with her were members of a ' church ' which met at her house. We might go further and surmise that it was at the meetings in this house that the dissensions first became apparent. But all this is conjectural ; and we cannot even be certain that Chloe was a resident at Corinth. Some commentators think that it is more likely that she lived at Ephesus, and suggest that some members of her household had visited Corinth and had brought back to the apostle the disquieting news. 1 Cor. i, 11

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1 *Notes on Epistles, ad loc.*

But if our authorities supply us with no information regarding individual Christian women at Corinth, it is evident from the First Epistle to the Corinthians that women formed a large part of the membership of the church and were entering fully into its life and work.

Certain problems had arisen in consequence; and among these were a number of questions relating to marriage. Corinth was notorious for its immorality; and St. Paul in this Epistle is obliged to warn the Christians against sexual evil, and even to rebuke the church for its seeming indifference to the presence of this evil among its members. But an opposite tendency had revealed itself. In a reaction from the prevailing sensuality some Christians had begun to think that marriage itself was incompatible with the highest chastity. Celibacy, as practised by the Jewish sect of the Essenes, by the Therapeutae, who included Jews, Greeks, and barbarians, and by some purely heathen associations, was finding favour in the community. Married Christians were inclined to abstain from marriage in the full sense. It had even been suggested,—and it would seem probable that the suggestion had come from women,—that they should separate altogether. This course was being specially advocated in cases of marriage where one of the partners had become a Christian while the other remained an 'unbeliever.' Again, according to the usual interpretation of the passage, some Christian fathers were hesitating about giving their daughters in marriage.

1 Cor. vii, 1 *ff*

St. Paul's advice upon these matters had been

sought by letter. It will suffice here briefly to summarize his replies.

The apostle says not a single word which can lead us to believe that he shared the view that marriage was to be avoided as polluting or evil in itself. At the same time it is clear that he welcomed the tendency towards celibacy and asceticism. He did so however on quite other grounds from those upon which the Corinthians were basing their objection to the married state. Celibacy seemed to him to be more desirable than marriage in view of the period of hardship and persecution through which the Church was called to pass. That period he calls ' the present distress.' In the language of Jewish apocalyptic, Christians were experiencing or were about to experience ' the birth-pangs of the Messiah,' in which it had constantly been predicted that there would be special troubles for married women.[1] So that while there is no sin in marriage, the married will undoubtedly ' have tribulation in the flesh ' ; and St. Paul says that he would ' spare ' his converts this by advising them to keep free from all earthly ties. The second Advent of the Lord could not be long delayed. ' The time is shortened . . . the fashion of this world passeth away.' Married and unmarried persons alike must take up an attitude of detachment, but the celibate man and woman will be able to do this better than husbands and wives can. ' This I say

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1 Thackeray, *Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought*, 105*f*.

for your own profit ; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is seemly, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.'

St. Paul himself was unmarried, or perhaps a widower ; and he says ' I would have all men even as myself.' But at the same time he recognized the temptations which would attend celibacy, especially in a city like Corinth ; and he recommends marriage as a safeguard ' because of (the) fornications.' And again, ' I say to the unmarried and to widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they have not continency, let them marry ; for it is better to marry than to burn.'

It cannot be denied that if this were the whole of the apostle's teaching on the subject, his view of marriage was not the highest. But we must remember, as Robertson-Plummer remarks, that here ' the apostle is not discussing the characteristics of the ideal married life.'[1] The ethics of marriage and of the Christian family are more worthily developed in later Epistles, when the uncertainty of all existing things was weighing less heavily upon the mind of St. Paul, and when he had had occasion to revise his expectations of the immediate return of the Lord.

We are concerned mainly here with the question how far the apostle's views, as expressed in First Corinthians, would be likely to affect the position of women in the Church. It has already been said that the doctrine of the equality of the

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[1] *First Corinthians, ad loc.*

sexes in religion tended from the first to modify the current ideas of the marriage relation. In spite of its incompleteness St. Paul's teaching is an illustration of this tendency.

All extra-matrimonial connexions, which degraded women, are forbidden by the words 'let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband.' If it be said that the Greek words represented by 'his own' and 'her own' are not the same and suggest that the apostle thought of the husband as the owner of the wife, it may be replied that very likely he shared the common notion that the wife was her husband's property, but as a matter of fact the words have recently been shown to be interchangeable in sense.

Again, it never occurred to St. Paul that an unmarried daughter could have any independence of her father. His whole treatment of the 'virgins' shows that he thought of them as entirely under their father's control. At the same time, in dealing with the suggestion that married persons should abstain from complete marriage, and in approving temporary abstinence and that only by mutual consent, he declares that the husband has no rights which the wife has not—a very great advance upon popular opinion. 'Equality between the sexes,' say Robertson-Plummer, 'is indicated by using the same expression respecting both, thus correcting Jewish and Gentile ideas about women':[1] 'the wife hath not power over her own body, but the

[1] *loc. cit.*

husband : and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife.'

Again, in replying to the proposal that married persons should separate, the apostle asserts emphatically the indissolubility of the marriage bond, basing it upon our Lord's words about divorce and apparently ignorant of the modification ' except for fornication ' which is found in St. Matthew's Gospel. Nothing tended more effectively to raise the status of women than this condemnation of divorce. If, however, a separation cannot be avoided, says St. Paul, there is to be no remarriage. It would seem that women had raised this question, because it is the case of a wife who may wish, no doubt on ascetic grounds, to ' depart from her husband,' which is mentioned first. There is probably no significance to be attached to the fact that the apostle uses the term ' departing ' for the woman and ' leaving,' or rather ' putting away ' of the husband, The former term is used in the papyri for a man divorcing his wife. At all events in speaking of the separation of married persons when one is a Christian and the other is not, St. Paul puts both on a level by using here the term which is commonly used of the husband. He is opposed to this separation also, unless the ' unbelieving ' partner insists upon it ; because the ' unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother.' In religious matters at any rate and in the effect produced upon the non-Christian partner, there is no inequality.

It has been assumed above that the 'virgins' are unmarried daughters, whose fathers, according to St. Paul will 'do well' if they give them in marriage, but will 'do better' if they keep them unmarried. This is the traditional interpretation. But it is at least possible, as some have suggested, that the reference here is to a custom which existed among the Therapeutae and which we know grew up at a later time in the Church, namely that of 'spiritual marriage,' in which men and women lived together although both parties had bound themselves by a vow of continency.[1] If this be so—and in view of the enthusiasm for the ascetic ideal which prevailed among the Christians of Corinth, it is not unlikely that the custom should have originated there,—it would seem that the arrangement was proving too great a strain for human nature. St. Paul, who upon this hypothesis approved of 'spiritual marriage,' gave the advice in such cases 'let them marry,'—words which present a great difficulty on the supposition that he is referring to fathers and daughters. On the other hand there is an equal difficulty in the words 'he that giveth his own virgin in marriage' etc.; but this is explained by supposing that the apostle recommends that the woman should leave the house in which her position had become impossible and should be married to another man.

There is no further reference in the New Testament to this custom, unless we can suppose that

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[1] Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, 184*ff*: Achelis, art. 'Agapaetae,' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

it is the right to form such a connexion, rather than to be married, which St. Paul claims for himself and his fellow-missionaries in 1 Corinthians ix. 5. Assuming the celibacy of the apostles, some of the Fathers believe that this is the meaning here, and discard the rendering 'wife' for that of 'a woman.'[1] But there can be little doubt that this is a misinterpretation.

XVIII.

A large part of the First Epistle to the Corinthians has for its subject the regulation of conduct in the assemblies of the church. There would seem to be evidence of the number and importance of women in the community in the fact that St. Paul deals first with an irregularity of which women had been guilty.

1 Cor. xi, 3 *ff.* Women, apparently by way of asserting their spiritual equality with men, which the apostle himself taught, had begun to attend and take part in the meetings for worship unveiled. These women may have been mainly converted *hetairai*, of whom there were of course many at Corinth as at Athens, and who were the only Greek women who went about without a covering upon their heads. Both sexes among the Greeks, however, were in the habit of worshipping with their heads covered. It is doubtful whether Jewish men at this time wore the *tallith*, or praying

[1] Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose.

shawl, in the synagogues ; but the women were certainly veiled. At all events St. Paul considered that it was not ' seemly ' for Christian women to discard the covering ; and when we remember that a bare head was ordinarily the badge of a woman of bad character, it is easy to see that at Corinth especially there was something to be said against the practice. The Church had enough prejudice to contend against without unnecessarily shocking people by a breach of convention. St. Paul entirely forbids the custom. Natural instinct, he asserts, is opposed to it ; it is not the practice of ' the churches of God.' And so far the apostle's prohibition seems reasonable enough in the existing circumstances.

But it cannot be denied that his further arguments are lacking in force or that he ' makes his conservative decision by the application of principles which seem to us neither self-evident nor yet drawn by necessary inference from the doctrines of Christianity.'[1]

In the first place, he asserts that ' the head of every man is Christ ; and the head of the woman is the man ; and the head of Christ is God. . . . Every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoureth her head.' As Weinel remarks, St. Paul seems to conceive God under the image of a man as distinct from a woman, and thus admits the man to a superior position with regard to her.'[2]

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[1] Ropes, *Apostolic Age*, 181.
[2] *St. Paul*, 24.

The apostle goes on to say that ' a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God : but the woman is the glory of the man.' The man, or the husband—for it is evident that throughout this passage St. Paul has married women in view—represents God in a way that the woman does not. But the passage in Genesis to which allusion is here made, says that ' God created man in His own image, ' man ' being the word which denotes ' mankind,' including both sexes ; ' male and female created He them.' Not to accuse St. Paul of deliberately substituting for this word the word which means ' man ' as distinct from ' woman,' we cannot but feel that here he is reflecting the common Jewish view of woman which gave her an altogether inferior position.

Gen. i, 27

Again, stress is laid upon the fact that woman was created after man : ' the man is not of the woman ; but the woman of the man : for neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.' Similarly in the First Epistle to Timothy, the prohibition against a woman teaching is supported by the statement that ' Adam was first formed, then Eve,' and further, that ' Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled, hath fallen into transgression.' The divine sanction thus claimed for the subordination of woman to man rests upon a belief in the literal truth of the stories of the creation and the fall. This argument was no doubt considered to be conclusive in the rabbinical schools ; but St. Paul seems to realize its incon-

1 Tim. ii, 12*ff*

sistency with the doctrine of the equality of the sexes in religion. He hastens to say that ' in the Lord,' *i.e.* in Christ, ' neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman.' Each is dependent upon the other. ' For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman ; but all things are of God.'

Lastly, it is ' because of the angels ' that the woman ought to be veiled and thus ' have a sign of authority upon her head.' The latter phrase is extremely difficult and the reference to the angels is obscure. One plausible explanation is that which takes the angels to be evil angels and sees in the ' authority,' not the authority of the husband over his wife, but the power which the woman herself possesses to frustrate the designs of the angels. On this supposition, St. Paul has in his mind, as Mr. Thackeray says, ' legendary amplifications of the account in Genesis vi. of the sin of ' the sons of God ' (in the Septuagint,' ' the angels of God ') with the daughters of men. The allusions to the creation and the fall, this writer thinks, carried on the apostle's thoughts to the next and only kindred passage in Genesis, ' in which the relations of the sexes are described as subverted by the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men.'[1] Robertson-Plummer, however, consider that this suggestion is ' somewhat childish,' and say that the meaning is that ' if a woman thinks lightly of shocking men, she must remember that she will also be shocking the

[1] *op. cit.*, 159*ff.*

angels, who of course are present at public worship.'[1] But no satisfactory explanation of the 'authority' is offered.

How far these arguments told at Corinth and affected the conduct of the Christian women we cannot say. But when the reaction against the prominence of women in the apostolic Church set in, St. Paul's words were fastened upon to support the low position which was then accorded to women.

It is chiefly to our purpose here to notice that St. Paul says not one word against women 'praying or prophesying' in the church meetings. From the phrase 'every woman' it is evident that the participation of women in the assemblies in this way was a normal feature of the worship of the community. The suggestion that St. Paul is contemplating only an exceptional occurrence is quite arbitrary. The apostle takes the prophetic ministry of women for granted and assumes that it will continue. He is concerned only with the dress which the inspired women will wear when they lead the prayers or expound the will of God in the congregation.

XIX.

It is incredible that if St. Paul had wished to forbid women to pray and prophesy in the meetings of the church at Corinth he should have con-

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[1] *First Corinthians, ad loc.*

fined himself in the passage which we have been considering to the question of propriety in headdress. This consideration alone makes it impossible to suppose that, if the later passage in which women are emphatically forbidden to ' speak ' in ' the churches ' be genuine, it refers to the same subject. 1 Cor. xiv. 34*ff*

The whole passage is this : ' let the women keep silence in the churches : for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home : for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church.'

We need not consider the suggestion that in the former passage the apostle has in mind meetings of a private character. The ' prophesying ' of both the men and the women, of whom St. Paul speaks, means, in the words of Robertson-Plummer, ' public teaching, admonishing or comforting, delivering God's message to the congregation.' The same authorities add that ' praying or prophesying ' must be understood in the same way in both verses : ' it is arbitrary to say that the man is supposed to be taking the lead in full public worship, but the woman in mission services or family prayers.'[1] Therefore, unless we can suppose that in the course of the Epistle the apostle changed his mind and withdrew what must be called the tacit permission of the earlier passage, leaving it all the while unerased, it is clear that

[1] *op. cit. ad loc.*

the 'speaking' forbidden in the fourteenth chapter cannot be 'prophesying.'

Nor must it be forgotten that St. Paul has just written 'I would have you all speak with tongues, but rather that ye should prophesy.' The Epistle was addressed to 'the church of God that is at Corinth'; and as we have already pointed out with regard to the Epistles to the Thessalonians, we cannot imagine that the women Christians were not included in the phrase. 'When ye come together,' says the apostle again, 'every one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation.' Are women excluded here? This can only be supposed on the unfounded assumption that the teaching in the whole section, chapters xii.-xiv., was not meant for women. But the very subject of the section—the 'diversities' of the gifts of the Spirit in the Church—forbids such an idea. Moreover, St. Paul would have been the last to dare to forbid the exercise of a gift of the Spirit which he so highly prized and which most of all spiritual gifts he exhorted his converts earnestly to desire.

1 Cor. xii, 4

We must seek then for another meaning for the words 'let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak.' Many explanations have been suggested. Weizsäcker, for example, thinks that it is the business meetings of the church, 'when the men framed decrees,' in which the women are not to take part.[1] But the most probable supposition is that it is con-

[1] *Apostolic Age*, ii. 386.

versational speech which is here referred to. As Dr. Adeney has written, ' This is brought out more clearly by the sentence following the injunction against speaking, where the apostle proceeds to say that if the women would learn anything they should ask their husbands at home. This can have nothing to do with prophesying, because it was not for the purpose of learning that anybody prophesied. In exercising the solemn gift a man took upon him to instruct or to enlighten his brethren. Talking with a view to learning, not teaching, can only be inquiring, disputing, objecting, and the idea seems to be some sort of interruption of the teaching or prophesying that is going on in the church. St. Paul holds that it is not seemly for women thus to talk—he might almost say ' to chatter ' in church. If there is anything that does not commend itself to them, let them wait till the public service is over, and then raise the point in the privacy of the home with their husbands.' [1]

It is quite possible, however, that the passage never came from the pen of St. Paul, but is a later interpolation. It is true that no manuscripts omit it ; but in Codex Bezae and others [2] it is placed at the end of the chapter. It is found in this position also in the commentary of Ambrosiaster or Pseudo-Ambrosius, the unknown writer of the earliest commentary on all St. Paul's Epistles which has come down to us.

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[1] *Women of the New Testament*, 274*f.*

[2] E. F. G.

The Latin text used by him ' must be at least as old as 370.' It ' is at least coeval with our oldest complete manuscripts of the Greek Bible, and thus presupposes a Greek text anterior to them.'[1] The fact that the passage in which women are forbidden to ' speak ' is out of its place in this commentary and elsewhere at least arouses the suspicion that it may not have been part of the original Epistle. It certainly seems to be introduced with abruptness, and the chapter reads quite smoothly without it. After what we have already seen of the tendency to alter manuscripts in favour of the reaction against the important position held by women in the Church of the earliest days, it is not difficult to imagine that an addition of this kind would be made perhaps in the second century, when, as Ramsay remarks, the dislike of the prominence and the public ministration of women ' was intensified to abhorrence.'[2]

This hypothesis has not found favour with many English scholars, but a number of foreign scholars support it. Two of these may be quoted. Pfleiderer says : ' This prohibition of women's speaking in the assemblies for worship stands in striking contradiction to xi. 5, where, while it is forbidden that women should appear unveiled when preaching or prophesying, it is implied that their speaking in public is permissible. The contradiction cannot in my opinion be removed

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[1] Souter, *A Study of Ambrosiaster*, 195.
[2] *Church in the Roman Empire*, 162.

either by means of the distinction between public and private worship, of which there is no hint, nor by means of the distinction between 'spiritual' and ordinary speech, since the prohibition in xiv. 35*f.* is expressed in quite general terms, and makes no exception in favour of 'spiritual' speech. There seems therefore to be no way out of the difficulty except to suppose that verses 34*f.*, perhaps 33*b* and 36, are a later addition. . . . In favour of this is the surprising appeal to the law in verse 34, which would come strangely from Paul; also the fact that in some MSS. verses 34*f.* are placed after verse 40, and may therefore very likely have crept into the text from a marginal gloss.'[1]

Weinel writes: 'We may perhaps assume interpolation by a later hand, and have not to attempt an artificial harmony between this blunt pronouncement and its opposite a few chapters earlier. We must not be surprised at such later additions. For we know that throughout subsequent centuries an embittered fight was fought all over Christendom about the right of women to speak in public worship. And the ecclesiastics who, for peace' sake and to avoid all evil reputation, continually diminished the woman's religious equality —and in thus subordinating her lowered themselves again to the 'world's' level—were not afraid either of calumniating their enemies or of applying 'emendations' to ancient scriptures.'[2]

There is a close parallelism in thought between

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[1] *Primitive Christianity*, i. 169n. [2] *St. Paul*, 276*f.*

this passage in First Corinthians and the passage
1 Tim. ii. 11*ff* in First Timothy, to which allusion has already been made : ' let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness.' Here again it is not ' prophesying ' which is in view. The apostle, if indeed these words are to be attributed to St. Paul, is silent, as Ramsay remarks, about the right of women to prophesy; 'but that right he could not deny, where the Holy Spirit prompted.'[1]

But if the genuineness of 1 Corinthians xiv. 34*f.* be doubtful, still more doubtful is the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles at least in their present form. The matter of course cannot be discussed here. It is enough to say that in the opinion of many scholars the difference in style from that of the apostle's acknowledged Epistles, the changed outlook, the development of church organization reflected, preclude a direct Pauline authorship and suggest a date not much earlier than 110, about which time these Epistles can be shown to have been used by Ignatius and Polycarp. If this be so, this passage also must be taken as evidence of the reaction against the freedom with which women shared at first in the life and work of the Church. The prohibition itself, whether made by St. Paul or a little later, would seem to prove that in the early days of Christianity women *did* ' teach ' ; otherwise it would not have been necessary.

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[1] *Expositor*, vii. viii. 339.

We have seen that the argument upon which the prohibition is based is the priority of the creation of Adam and the sin of Eve. The passage goes on, ' but she shall be saved through the child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.' Many suggestions have been made as to the meaning of these words. The ' child-bearing ' has sometimes been understood to refer to the Incarnation, an attractive but highly improbable view. More frequently it has been interpreted as the motherhood of women in general ; but this carries with it the crude implication that only a woman who bears a child can be saved. The suggestion that ' maternal instinct ' rather than physical motherhood is intended is scarcely admissible. The best sense is obtained by taking both ' child-bearing ' and ' saved ' in their natural meaning : ' she shall be brought safely through child birth, if they (perhaps husband and wife) continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.'

It has sometimes been thought that in this chapter also women are forbidden to offer prayer in the church assemblies. ' I desire,' says the writer, ' that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing. In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety ; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment ; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works.' The prayer here mentioned may be general prayer in which all take part alike ; but even if the reference is to

leading the prayers of the congregation it is by no means certain that women are tacitly excluded. In fact the Greek word translated ' in like manner' only has its proper force in the passage when they are regarded as sharing in this ministry. All that is demanded is that in its exercise, as at all times, they should dress and behave with seemly reverence. The injunction is therefore similar to that with regard to the veil in 1 Corinthians xi. 3*ff.*

XX.

We may be sure that St. Paul's missionary activity in Achaia was not confined to Corinth ; and it would seem probable that it was during his prolonged stay in the city that a church was founded at Cenchreae, the eastern port, about seven miles distant. At all events when Romans xvi was written there was a Christian community in the town ; and one of its leading members was a woman named Phoebe, who, like Prisca, had been intimately associated with the apostle's work.

Rom. xvi. 1 *f.*

Phoebe was evidently preparing to go on a journey ; and it may be presumed that she was the bearer of the letter in which her name occurs, and in which she is commended to the Christians in the place to which she is about to travel. We shall suppose that she was intending to sail eastward from Cenchreae or westward from Lechaeum the port on the Corinthian Gulf, according to our view of the probable destination of this chapter.

If these verses are an integral part of the Epistle to the Romans, her journey was of course to Rome, and she carried with her the most important of St. Paul's letters so far as they are known to us. If on the other hand, as has already been suggested, it is more likely that these verses were addressed to the church at Ephesus, Phoebe was bound for that city.

St. Paul bespeaks for her not only a welcome 'in the Lord,' but assistance from those whom she is about to visit 'in whatsoever matter she may have need' of them. Now if the term 'matter' bears here its common forensic sense and means, as we should say, a 'case,' it is possible that business of some kind at the law-courts necessitated for Phoebe an appearance in Rome.[1] We shall then believe that the apostle, hearing of her projected journey, took the opportunity of writing and dispatching his Epistle to the Romans. The Imperial post was not available for private correspondence, and such a letter as this could only be sent by special messenger or by a trusted friend who happened to be travelling. But the impossibility of determining the object of Phoebe's journey from the use of the word 'matter' may be illustrated by our Lord's words about prayer: 'if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything (literally, any matter) that they shall ask.' And it is quite probable that the 'matters' in which Phoebe would require assistance were matters connected with the Church. Indeed, if

Matt. xviii. 19

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1 Gifford, *Romans*, 231.

we think that she was going to Rome, it may well have been that she had been specially sent by St. Paul and charged by him with the duty of reinforcing and supplementing the message with which she was entrusted.

Assuming however that her destination was Ephesus, there can be little doubt that Romans xvi. 1-21 or 23 was a letter written by the apostle expressly for the purpose of introducing Phoebe, whatever her errand may have been, to the persons who are greeted in it and among whom there are a number of Christian women. Such
2 Cor. iii. 1 ' epistles of commendation ' were a characteristic feature of the apostolic Church, as was the constant intercourse between the Christian communities which necessitated them, and the generous hospitality which they called forth. They were a protection against strangers who might turn out to be impostors. They formed one of the strongest links which bound the scattered churches together. The verb used by St. Paul is the regular term in classical Greek and in the Greek of the papyri for introductions by letter. If we suppose that Phoebe was not travelling on private business, but was commissioned by the apostle to visit the Ephesian Christians, we may perhaps find in the warning against false teachers, which he included in the letter, the reason for her mission.

Phoebe is described by St. Paul as ' our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae,' and as one who ' hath been a succourer of many and of mine own self.'

That she was evidently preparing to travel alone suggests that she was a widow; and the term translated 'succourer' indicates that she was a woman of means. The term in its masculine form was used of the wealthy and influential Greek citizen who acted as the representative of aliens and others who had no civic rights. It sometimes denoted also the patron of a pagan religious society; and, as Dr. Lindsay has pointed out, these patrons 'were frequently ladies of rank and wealth.'[1] In some places a similar custom had been adopted by the Jews; and such titles as 'mistress of the synagogue' and 'mother of the synagogue' are not unknown.[2] The term is not found again in the New Testament. But it is closely related to two non-technical terms used by St. Paul for leaders in the churches :—'those that are over you,' and 'he that ruleth.' In 1 Timothy v. 17 also it is applied to 'elders.' 'Succourer' is therefore an inadequate rendering, but it is difficult to suggest a good translation. The meaning of the title, as applied to Phoebe, is, however, clear, especially in view of what we have already seen of the position of Christian women of the same social standing elsewhere. She was a well-to-do woman, so circumstanced that she was able in a special degree to discharge those duties of 'communicating to the saints' and of 'pursuing hospitality' which the apostle prescribes for all Christians. She had 'ministered of her substance'

1 Thess. v. 12
Rom. xii. 8

Rom. xii. 13

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1 *Church and Ministry in the Early Centuries*, 124n.

2 Schechter, *Studies in Judiasm*, i. 386.

to the Christians at Cenchreae and perhaps at Corinth also. She had ministered to St. Paul, and had no doubt received him into her house when he visited or passed through the town. Her house was probably the place where the community met for worship and instruction, the headquarters of the mission. The owner naturally was looked up to as the ' patron ' or ' president,' as we may almost render the term. Phoebe was the acknowledged head or leader, the ' mother ' of the infant church.

This explains the other term by which Phoebe is described. She is called the ' servant ' of the church at Cenchreae ; and the margin of the Revised Version reads ' deaconess.' Both translations are misleading. ' Servant ' is too vague ; ' deaconess ' is an official title, limiting the bearer's work. The term is exactly the same as that translated ' minister,' when applied to men. It is in fact the term used of every kind of service rendered to our Lord or the Church, beginning with the ministering women disciples in the Gospels. Apollos, Tychicus, Epaphras, Timothy, and St. Paul himself, are all described by it. And no one would be satisfied to call these men either ' servants ' or ' deacons.' Yet the case of Phoebe has constantly been cited as evidence of the existence in the apostolic age of an order of deaconesses. In the church of Corinth, where indeed there seem to have been at first no formal offices, there was at the time no such order, nor was there an order of men deacons. The only certain reference in the New Testament to official

1 Cor. iii. 5, Eph. vi. 21, Col i. 7, 1 Thess. iii. 2, Eph. iii. 7

deacons is in 1 Timothy, where both men and women deacons are mentioned. 'Of Phoebe, then,' writes Dean Robinson, 'we may say with certainty that she is a witness to the important services rendered by women in the primitive Church; but in tracing the history of the diaconate it will not be wise to assume that the word *diakonos* is used of her in the strictly official sense.'[1]

The fact is that Phoebe belonged to that period of the history of the Church when informal and spontaneous 'ministries' had not yet given place to definite offices and when leadership was based only upon willingness and ability to 'serve' the brethren. In those early days to be a Christian at all was to be a 'minister'; and women according to their powers co-operated with men in the manifold activities of the local communities, in which as in the Church at large there was no room for rivalries and distinctions. 'You see,' says St. Chrysostom, referring to Phoebe and to Prisca, 'these were noble women, hindered in no way by their sex in the course of virtue; and this is as might be expected, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.'[2]

XXI.

In writing to introduce Phoebe to 'the saints' at Ephesus, as we suppose, St. Paul mentions in Rom. xvi. 3 *ff*

[1] art. 'Deacon,' *Encyclopædia Biblica.*

[2] *In Ep. ad Rom. Homil.* xxx.

the form of greetings the persons whom she will meet and from whom he asks for her with confidence a welcome and assistance. Although, with the probable exception of Prisca and Aquila, not yet personally acquainted with them, she is their ' sister.' They and she are already united in the closest of bonds as fellow-members of the same great spiritual family. They needed only to be made known to one another to realize their intimate relationship in mutual love and service.

Naturally the apostle thinks of the leading women of the community to which Phoebe is going. By these in particular he would expect the visitor to be shown affectionate regard. From these she would be sure to receive that sympathy and help which she herself had readily extended to Christian travellers. To their charge, therefore, as well as to the care of a number of men, he commends his messenger.

Seven, and perhaps eight, women are named in addition to Prisca, who is the first member of the church to be mentioned and at whose house it may be presumed Phoebe was to be entertained.

Four of these women—Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, and Persis—St. Paul describes as ' labourers.' Mary was probably a Jewess. That her name should occur to the apostle immediately after those of Prisca and Aquila, and Epaenetus, ' the first-fruits of Asia unto Christ,' suggests that she was one of the most prominent persons in the community. She is said to have ' laboured much for you.' The Authorised Version rendering

'for us' represents an alteration in the text,[1] which may be due to a common confusion between the pronouns, or may have been made at a time when it was thought improbable that a woman should have played a more important part in Church life than that of doing some personal service for the apostle. Mary may very well have been one of the early converts who assisted in establishing the mission.

Tryphaena and Tryphosa were probably freed-women. They may have been converts from paganism, or possibly they had been 'God-fearers.' The similarity of their names suggests that they were sisters; Dr. Rendel Harris thinks that they were twins.[2] Unlike Mary, whose days of activity seem to have been over, they are still 'labouring in the Lord.' The contrast between this description and the meaning of their names, which are derived from the verb translated 'live delicately' in St. James v. 5, cannot have escaped the notice of writer or of readers.

Persis was perhaps also a freedwoman. St. Paul calls her 'the beloved,' not surely as St. Chrysostom suggests to show that she was greater than Tryphaena and Tryphosa.[3] The designation may indicate that she had had a special connexion with the apostle. She may have been one of his own converts or may have been closely associated with him in his work. If so, it is perhaps with intentional delicacy that he distinguishes her from

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1 found in L. 2 *Dioscuri in the Christian Legends*, i.
3 *In Ep. ad Rom. Homil.* xxxi.

three men whom he greets as 'my beloved.' But it is more natural to suppose that the term implies the general affection and esteem with which Persis was regarded by her fellow-Christians. She too had 'laboured much in the Lord,' and all had learned to love and revere her.

The verb used by St. Paul to describe the activities of these four women is not that which is applied by him to Euodia and Syntyche at Philippi and translated also 'laboured.' But it is an equally strong term; and curiously enough both terms are connected with the athletic contests. The word translated 'labour' here means in classical Greek 'to become fatigued'; but in Hellenistic Greek it denotes the toil which causes fatigue. It is applied in the New Testament to such physical exertion as that of the fishermen on the lake; and St. Paul uses it of the hard, tedious work by which he earned his living and maintained his independence. Again, as Deissmann has told us, the very phrase 'laboured much' has been found on the tombstone of a gardener of the period in Asia Minor.[1] Clearly a term which can have such applications as these must, when applied to the work of women in the Church, indicate no small measure of energy and zeal. These women had made strenuous efforts, they had toiled with all their strength.

Lk. v. 5
1 Cor. iv. 12

Now in eight other passages of the New Testament this verb is used to describe Christian service, and at least in seven of these it refers to

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[1] *Light from the Ancient East*, 316.

ministerial labours. Four times St. Paul applies it to his own missionary efforts. He tells the Corinthians, for example, that he 'laboured more abundantly' than all the apostles; and his meaning is clear from the words which follow: 'whether it be I or they, so we preach and so ye believed.' Again, the leaders of the church at Thessalonica are described as 'those that labour among you'; and the Christians at Corinth are bidden to submit themselves to such persons as the members of the 'ministering' household of Stephanas, 'to every one that helpeth in the work and laboureth.' In 1 Timothy certain elders are spoken of as those 'who labour in the Word and in teaching.' Thus the term, as Weinel says, is 'applied to the work of an apostle and accordingly to assistance in the Word, as well as to that practical service which was necessary to the first gathering together of a church of believers,—assistance in church management.'[1]

1 Cor. xv. 10

1 Thess. v. 12

1 Cor. xvi. 16

1 Tim. v. 17

The length to which some commentators will go rather than attach a similar meaning to the term when it is applied to women may be illustrated by the suggestion of Godet who supposes that it was 'during some epidemic which had raged in the church' that Mary and the others had rendered conspicuous service.[2] No doubt these women, like the women disciples in the Gospels, were able and willing to supply the material needs of their brethren; and we must always remember that no sharp distinction was

[1] *St. Paul*, 213.

[2] *Commentary ad loc.*

drawn in the apostolic age between one kind of 'ministering' and another. But the idea of their active participation in actual missionary work cannot be excluded. The Fathers indeed, in view of the supposed Pauline prohibitions, cannot admit that they preached or taught publicly; but they have no doubt that they ministered the Word in every other way. 'The women of those days,' says St. Chrysostom on this passage, 'were more spirited than lions, sharing with the apostles their labours for the Gospel's sake. In this way they went travelling with them and performed all other ministries.'[1] And again, in speaking of 'Prisca, Persis, and the rest,' he declares 'it was the business of these women to spread the Word.'[2]

XXII.

After Persis, St. Paul greets a man named Rufus 'and his mother and mine.' If we think it more likely that these verses are a part of the original Epistle to the Romans, we shall be inclined perhaps to agree with Dr. Swete that 'with some probability' this Rufus may be identified with Rufus, the son of Simon the Cyrenian, who bore the Lord's cross, mentioned with his brother Alexander in St. Mark's Gospel, which is generally supposed to have been written

Mk. xv. 21

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[1] *In Ep. ad Rom. Homil.* xxxi.

[2] *In Ev. Matt. Homil.* lxxiii. 3.

in Rome for Roman Christians.[1] But Rufus was a very common name ; and Dr. Gould thinks that the identification is ' the height of foolish conjecture.'[2]

The Rufus saluted here is described as ' the chosen in the Lord.' This description is of course applicable to every Christian ; all are ' God's elect.' But for some reason it was peculiarly appropriate in the case of this man. Perhaps, as Weizsäcker suggests, the designation ' recalled special circumstances, in which a striking intervention of the divine grace had been recognized, by which his conversion was effected.'[3] Or it may simply indicate, as Sanday-Headlam render it, that Rufus was ' eminent as a Christian.'[4] There can be little doubt that he and his mother were important persons in the community to which they belonged. The mother of Rufus was probably an elderly woman ; and somewhere she had befriended the apostle, treating him as her own son. It cannot have been at Rome ; for St. Paul had not yet visited that city. Assuming however the Ephesian destination of these salutations, we shall suppose that she had shown him kindness, and perhaps had given him hospitality in her house, on some occasion during his stay in Ephesus. He had not forgotten her sympathy and care. Ever after he had thought of her with affection and gratitude.

Col. iii. 12

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1 *St. Mark's Gospel, ad loc.*
2 *St. Mark's Gospel, ad loc.*
3 *Apostolic Age*, i. 395.
4 *Romans, ad loc.*

St. Paul's description of this woman as his 'mother' is an illustration of the way in which in the apostolic age the terms denoting family relationship were applied to members of the Church. The personal disciples of the apostle were his 'sons.' All Christians were 'brethren'; individual Christians were known as 'brother' or 'sister.' Senior Christians, as we know from the letter of the church at Jerusalem to the church at Antioch, were called 'elder brethren'; and sometimes they were called 'fathers' and 'mothers.' Thus Timothy is bidden, 'rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father . . . the elder women as mothers.' And the second century apologist Athenagoras tells us that Christians were accustomed to look upon one another, according to age, as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers.'[1] This conception of the Church as a Family helped to emphasize the fact that all alike shared in the privileges and responsibilities of its membership.

Acts xv. 23

1 Tim. v. 1*f*

Mention of two other women occurs in these salutations in a group of persons, the first of whom is a man named Philologus. St. Paul greets 'Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints that are with them.' Like the other groups mentioned in these verses, this group may be supposed to represent a 'house-church'; and the persons named were probably the leading members of it. It is natural to imagine that Philologus and Julia

[1] *Legatio*, 32.

were husband and wife. If so, like Aquila and Prisca, they may have been the joint-heads of the congregation. Some commentators go further and conjecture that the names which follow are the names of their children, who formed with them the nucleus of the church. It is not impossible that by the ' sister ' of Nereus we are meant to understand his wife, as ' sister ' was sometimes used in that sense. Neither she nor Julia would have been mentioned had they not in some way been prominent in the life and work of the community.

The occurrence in verse 7 of a name which may be either masculine or feminine makes it impossible to say with certainty whether in addition to Prisca seven or eight women are greeted in Romans xvi. The Revised Version reads ' salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me.' But, as the marginal reading indicates, the second name may be ' Junia.' If the name be indeed the name of a woman, she was probably the wife of Andronicus ; and we have another example of the co-operation of husband and wife in the service of the Church. There is nothing in the description of the pair as ' kinsmen ' of the apostle or as ' fellow-prisoners ' of his which is against this supposition. ' Kinsmen,' it may be remarked, almost certainly does not mean ' relatives,' but simply ' fellow-Jews,' possibly members of the same tribe. ' Fellow-prisoners ' may suggest that at some time these persons had actually shared

imprisonment with St. Paul ; or they may be so called because like him but not on the same occasion or at the same place they had endured persecution.

It is the phrase ' of note among the apostles ' which decides most commentators in taking the doubtful name as that of a man. Two interpretations of these words are possible. They may mean ' well-known and honoured by the apostles,' or ' notable and distinguished as apostles.' There can be very little doubt that the latter is to be preferred. Sanday-Headlam say that it is ' probably correct,' and point out that the passage was apparently so taken by all the patristic commentators.[1] But could a woman have been called an ' apostle,' even in the wider sense in which the title is used in the New Testament of persons other than the Twelve ? To many modern commentators it is unthinkable. But it was not at all an impossible idea to St. Chrysostom. ' To be apostles,' he says, ' is indeed a great thing ; but to be also of note among them, consider what high praise that is. Now they were of note on account of their works, their achievements. Oh ! how great was the devotion of this woman, that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle ! '[2]

' St. Paul,' says Dr. Knowling, ' has sometimes been accused of a want of due respect towards women. This last chapter of his Epistle to the Romans is sufficient in itself to refute such a

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[1] *Romans, ad loc.*

[2] *In Ep. ad Rom. Homil.* xxxi.

charge. From the beginning to the end, the writer chooses with the most apt consideration the title and the merit which belongs to each member of the household of God, and recognizes the special work which a woman, and often only a woman, can do in the Church.'[1]

XXIII.

St. Paul had made a stay of three years at Ephesus. During that time according to St. Luke 'all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.' The apostle himself did not evangelize the cities of the Lycus valley; but churches were founded, apparently by Epaphras, at Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae. Acts xix. 10

The Epistle 'to the Ephesians' was really a circular letter, written, according to the usual view, some five or six years later, perhaps to all these churches. It contains no personal references or greetings, and therefore adds nothing to our knowledge of individual Christian women.

The Epistle to the Colossians and the Epistle to Philemon were written at the same time and were dispatched to Asia Minor by the same messenger. In each of these a Christian woman is named in connexion with a 'house-church.'

The Revised Version of Colossians iv. 15 reads as follows: 'Salute the brethren that are at

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[1] *Testimony of St. Paul to Christ*, 466.

Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house.' But, as the marginal notes tell us, ' the Greek may represent *Nympha*,' and ' some ancient authorities read *her* house.' These are the readings which are preferred by Westcott and Hort, Nestle, and other modern editors of the text of the New Testament.

Like the doubtful name in Romans xvi. 7, the proper name in this greeting occurs in the accusative case. It is therefore impossible to determine whether it is masculine or feminine. Bishop Lightfoot supposed that if it were feminine it must be a Doric form, and he believed that it was ' in the highest degree improbable ' that such a form should be used here.[1] But, as Dr. Hort pointed out, similar forms are to be found in the New Testament.[2] Moreover, Dr. Moulton has since shown that the form is a possible one, apart from the hypothesis of a Doric origin.[3]

If the phrase which follows were ' the church that is in their house,' the matter would still be uncertain. If the reading of some manuscripts, ' his house,' be adopted, the proper name is of course a man's ; while ' her house ' is decisive in favour of a woman's name. There can be little doubt that the last is the correct reading. The manuscript evidence for it is very strong, although numerically slight.[4] The other readings may be regarded as alterations of the text, due no doubt

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1 *Colossians, ad loc.*

2 *Appendix*, Westcott and Hort's ed. of the Greek Testament 163.

3 *Prolegomena*, 48.

to the same cause as that which we have seen has produced variations in a number of passages relating to Christian women. It is much easier to believe that at a later time, when the prominence of women in the apostolic Church was viewed with dislike or incredulity, ' her house ' was changed into ' their house,' or into ' his house,' than that it was substituted for either of these. Haupt is probably right when he suggests that the alteration was made by copyists who could not suppose that a woman was ' at the head of a church.'[1]

As ' the brethren that are at Laodicea ' are mentioned separately, it has been conjectured that Nympha lived elsewhere, perhaps at Hierapolis, which is referred to in verse 13. But most commentators suppose that the ' house-church ' alluded to was in Laodicea and was a portion of the church in that city. Why this congregation and its head are singled out for special greeting, we cannot tell. Perhaps Nympha's house, like that of Lydia at Philippi, had been the first, and remained the central, meeting-place of the Christians. At all events she may be numbered among those women who held a prominent position in the local communities, and whose influence and work contributed in no small degree to the progress of Christianity in the earliest days.

The Epistle to Philemon is addressed not only to ' Philemon our beloved and fellow-worker,' but to ' Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house.' Philemon i. *f*

[1] *Commentary, ad loc.*

From the fact that Onesimus, Philemon's slave, is mentioned as belonging to Colossae, it may be presumed that the 'house-church' greeted here was in that city.

Philemon was a rich man, with a *familia* of slaves. We may suppose that his own conversion was followed by the conversion of his household, and thus was formed the nucleus of the 'church.' No doubt other persons joined the congregation; and Apphia and Archippus may have been prominent among these.

In Colossians iv. 17, St. Paul sends a message to Archippus: 'take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.' Bishop Lightfoot thinks that Archippus may have lived at Laodicea;[1] but it is more natural to suppose that he was exercising his ministry at Colossae. He was evidently one of the leaders, if not the chief leader, of the local church. Theodoret conjectures that he 'was entrusted with the teaching' of the congregation which met at Philemon's house.[2] It is clear from the apostle's description of him as his 'comrade' that he was active in the work of evangelization. Theodore of Mopsuestia 'appears to stand alone' among ancient commentators in supposing that he was Philemon's son.[3] St. Chrysostom suggests that he was 'perhaps a friend.'[4] Whatever may have been his position in the household of Philemon, it was

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1 *Colossians*, 307.

2 *Commentary*, on Philem. i.

3 Swete, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 270.

4 *In Ep. ad Philem. Homil.* i.

natural that St. Paul should include the name of so important a person in his greeting to Philemon and the 'church.'

The same may be said of Apphia. With some probability, most commentators agree with St. Chrysostom that Apphia was Philemon's 'partner in life';[1] and it must be said that the words translated 'our sister' might be rendered 'thy wife.'[2] At the same time there is nothing in the Epistle to show that this was so. It might be argued that, if Apphia had been the wife of Philemon, we should have expected some suggestion that she was concerned with the domestic business—the matter of the runaway slave—on which St. Paul was writing to her husband. Would not the apostle have sought and welcomed the aid which the sympathy and influence of a Christian wife would have brought him in his appeal? The wife would surely also have been included in St. Paul's grateful recognition of Philemon's kindness and hospitality to his fellow-Christians. But in the body of the letter Philemon only is addressed; and it is only he who is asked to 'prepare a lodging,' presumably in his own house, when in answer to the prayers of all the apostle is able to visit him. We are inclined to contrast the phrase 'the church in thy house' with the phrase 'the church that is in their house,' which St. Paul uses to describe the Christians who had gathered round Aquila and Prisca.

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[1] *op. cit.*

[2] Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, 164.

If, however, we prefer to suppose that Philemon and Apphia were husband and wife, we shall conclude that here we have another example of a married couple co-operating as joint-leaders of a congregation, devoting themselves, their house and their means, perhaps also their son, to the service of the Church. Dr. Oesterley, who thinks that it is most natural to believe that Apphia was the wife of Philemon, supposes that 'she must have occupied also, most likely, a quasi-official position in the Church,' and that this view is supported by the description 'our sister,' assuming the meaning to be 'our fellow-Christian,' coming as it does between the description of Philemon as 'our fellow-worker' and that of Archippus as 'our fellow-soldier.'[1]

XXIV.

An indication of the number of women in the churches to which the Epistle 'to the Ephesians' and the Epistle to the Colossians were addressed is to be found in the exhortations to Christian wives, husbands, and children, which each of these letters contains.

Eph. v. 22 *ff.*
Col. iii. 18 *ff*

The exhortations are evidence also of a change in St. Paul's point of view from that which determined his treatment of the subject of marriage in First Corinthians. There is no suggestion here

[1] *Philemon, ad loc.*

that marriage is inexpedient because of the nearness of the Parousia ; and there is no commendation of celibacy. The apostle contemplates now the continuance of family life within the Church ; and its regulation has become for him a matter of great importance.

It is assumed that the households of Christians will not differ in organization from the households of others. Thus St. Paul recognizes and does not condemn the keeping of slaves ; and he enjoins slaves to obey their masters. But the principle of the religious equality of all Christians asserts itself, and he bids masters remember that they ' have a Master in heaven,' and that ' there is no respect of persons with Him.' In the same way the apostle does not rise above the current conception of the duty of a wife to be ' subject ' to her husband, although the apparent harshness of the term is modified by its use, in the passage in ' Ephesians ' immediately preceding, to describe the duty of all Christians ' one to another.' Women must act in accordance with the social ideas which prevailed ; and their position could not under existing circumstances be other than one of subordination. But again the new principle makes itself felt when St. Paul declares that it is the duty of husbands to ' love ' their wives. Here the apostle was far in advance of his time. ' The Greek or Roman husband, or indeed the Jewish husband, would probably recognize the obligation, if he were a gentleman, of treating his wife with some kindness and consideration, but he would be beyond measure astonished if he were informed

Eph. vi. 5 *ff*
Col. iii. 22 *ff*

that any moral obligation lay upon him to love her.'[1]

In Colossians the 'subjection' of wives is said to be 'fitting in the Lord.' It may be noted here
1 Pet. iii. 1 *f* that in 'First' Peter it is based upon the good effect to be produced upon unbelieving husbands: 'that even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behaviour of their wives; beholding your chaste behaviour coupled with fear.' In the Epistle to Titus it is
Tit. ii. 5 grounded upon the necessity that 'the word of God be not blasphemed.' In both these passages we can detect a natural anxiety lest any signs of revolution in domestic life should add to the difficulties with which the Church had to contend, and should hinder the cause of Christianity. Nothing could have been more disastrous for the success of the Gospel if in the eyes of Jews and Greeks it seemed to make the women who adopted it unsettled. Ramsay's words about St. Paul are no doubt true of all the teachers of the apostolic age: 'he felt that the reputation of the Church in pagan society, together with the future development of Christian society, depended largely upon' the women; and it was 'his strong opinion that it was unwise and dangerous for Christian women to go far outside of the conventions and current views as to propriety which were accepted in the Graeco-Roman world around them.'[2] This prudent caution must always be taken into account

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[1] Swayne, *St. Paul and His Gospel*, 54.

[2] *Expositor*, vii. viii. 275.

in any consideration of the New Testament passages relating to the status of married women which strike us as inconsistent with the fundamental declaration that in Christ ' there can be no male and female.' As in the case of slavery, the apostles supported for the time being the established customs while enunciating a principle which would ultimately overthrow them.

It is in the passage in ' Ephesians ' that we see most plainly how the doctrine of the equality of the sexes in religion was beginning to modify the ordinary view of the marriage-relation. As in 1 Corinthians xi. 3, the husband is regarded as ' the head of the wife ' ; and wives are told to be ' subject ' to their husbands and to ' reverence,' or, as the Revised Version renders it literally, to ' fear ' them. But there is nothing servile in the subordination ; for it is ' subjection ' to the Lord, and it finds its pattern in the devotion of the Church to its Head. Again, the love which husbands are to show their wives is to be a reflection of the love bestowed upon the Church by Christ, Who ' gave Himself up for it.' And finally, there is to be such complete oneness in marriage that it may be compared to the mystical union of the Church with Christ, so that in loving his wife the husband may be said to love himself. Thus the thought of headship and subordination passes on to the higher ideal of perfect unity ; and in justification of this doctrine St. Paul appeals to the words in Genesis which our Lord had quoted in support of the indissolubility of marriage : ' the twain shall become one flesh.'

XXV.

We have seen that the support of needy Christian widows was one of the chief concerns of the early communities at Jerusalem and Joppa. It cannot be doubted that the Pauline Churches also undertook this important duty.

In the church, presumably that of Ephesus, whose conditions are reflected in the First Epistle
1 Tim. v. 3 ff to Timothy, experience had shown that the care of the widows required careful regulation. It would seem that some Christians had been inclined to take advantage of the system of relief and had left their widowed relatives entirely dependent upon the community. This avoidance of responsibility is severely condemned: 'if any provideth not for his own, and specially for his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever' Assuming the Revised Version reading and the usual interpretation of v. 16, it appears that women in particular had been neglectful of their duty; for the injunction is added: 'if any woman that believeth hath widows, et her relieve them, and let not the church be burdened.'

Only those who were 'widows indeed,' destitute and friendless women, were to be assisted from the common fund; and it is assumed that the pensioner is one who 'hath set her hope upon God, and continueth in supplications and prayer, night and day.' The language, it may be remarked, recalls the description of Anna the prophetess in St. Luke ii. 37—'a widow . . .

which departed not from the temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day.'

It would seem also that there had been instituted something approaching to the 'order' of widows, to which frequent reference is made in early Christian literature outside the New Testament. The register of names and the qualifications for admission to the roll point to this: 'let none be enrolled as a widow under threescore years of age, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she hath brought up children, if she hath used hospitality to strangers, if she hath washed the saints' feet, if she hath relieved the afflicted, if she hath diligently followed every good work.' Unless we can suppose that the charity of the church was to be limited by such strict conditions as these, we must believe that the widows alluded to here were distinct from the pensioners whose relief is discussed in the previous section, and that they were a recognised body of women from whom certain services were required in return for their maintenance.

This view is supported by the objection to the enrolment of young widows on the ground that they are likely to marry again "rejecting their first faith," *i.e.*, apparently their pledge to remain a widow; for the possibility of remarriage could not have rendered widows ineligible for assistance. The temptation to which some young widows had yielded may confirm the supposition. It was no doubt 'in the discharge of their allotted

ministrations' as Archbishop Bernard suggests,[1] that 'they learn to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.'

The order was 'still in a fluid and uncertain condition,'[2] and the duties which were expected of the widows are not definitely stated. On account of the prescribed age it cannot be supposed that the services which they rendered were of a very active kind. Probably a continuance of the work which they had previously undertaken and which qualified them for admission was all that was demanded of them. Bishop Ellicott calls their functions 'presbyteral';[3] they were the elder 'sisters,' as men of age and experience were the elder 'brethren.' It cannot perhaps be maintained that the term *presbutides*, 'aged women,' in Titus ii. 3 is an official designation, as it is in the *Apostolic Constitutions;* but the duties assigned to these women were no doubt those which the widows were required to perform. They were to be 'teachers of that which is good,' and they were to 'train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.'

When we remember the almost technical use of the term 'widows' by St. Luke in the story of Tabitha of Joppa, we shall not doubt that a

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1 *Pastoral Epistles, ad loc.*

2 Ramsay, *Expositor*, vii. ix. 437.

3 *Commentary, ad loc.*

development in this direction was made at an early stage. The date to which we shall assign the notice in First Timothy will of course depend upon our view of the authorship of the Epistle.

Reference is made in an earlier passage of the same Epistle to another class of women who rendered special service to the community. 1 Tim. iii. 8ff

The writer recognizes two grades of office-bearers in the local church—those whom he calls 'bishops' or 'overseers,' who are identical with the 'elders' in v. 17, and others whom he names 'deacons' or 'ministers.' We have seen that the latter term is applied by St. Paul in a general sense to leaders in the Church—to himself and his fellow-workers, and among these to Phoebe. With the doubtful exception of Philippians i. 1, it is used in the New Testament as an official title in this passage only. In sub-apostolic literature it appears as the regular designation of those persons whose function in church organization is subordinate service as distinct from government; and it is evident that it bears this meaning in First Timothy in connexion with the term 'overseers.' The official application was not new. There is now abundant evidence in the papyri for this usage of the word *diakonos*, feminine as well as masculine, to denote the holders of various offices in the social and religious life of the heathen world.[1]

The passage in which the qualifications of the 'deacons' are set forth must be quoted in full:

[1] Moulton-Milligan, *Vocabulary*, ii.

'deacons in like manner must be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not guilty of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless. Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

This is the rendering of the Revised Version; and we might suppose that by 'women' Christian women in general are meant. But it is impossible to believe that an injunction with this intention would be parenthetically inserted in a passage relating to office-bearers in the church. The reference is undoubtedly to women who shared in the functions and work of the 'deacons.' 'Some have thought,' remarks St. Chrysostom, 'that this is said of women generally; but it is not so, for why should he introduce anything about women to interfere with his subject? He is speaking of women who hold the office of deacon.'[1] This is the interpretation of all ancient commentators, and in modern times it has been recognized as the correct view. But at the time when the Authorized Version was published there was no desire to assign to the women of the New Testament any position of importance in the

[1] *In Ep. ad Timoth. Homil.* xi.

Church, and the rendering 'their wives' was adopted. Not only is the absence of the article decisively against this rendering, but, as Dean Howson pointed out, it would be strange to find here directions about the character of deacons' wives, when 'in the early part of the chapter no such directions are given concerning the wives of the bishops, though they were certainly as important as the wives of the deacons.'[1] Some of the Fathers supposed that the wives of the deacons were the deaconesses. But not all of the deaconesses can have been married women. They would seem to have been distinct from the ministering widows, with whom they have often been confused; it is possible however that a widow in the ordinary sense might become a deaconess. In Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 112), where the earliest reference to deaconesses outside the New Testament occurs, they are alluded to as *ancillae*, handmaidens, 'who are called *ministrae*.'

It will be noted that the qualifications of the deaconesses correspond with slight variations to the first four qualifications of the deacons. Both are to be 'grave' in their demeanour. Both are to guard against sins of the tongue; the men are warned against talebearing, the women against slandering. Both again are to be careful in the use of wine; this is distinctly stated in the case of the men, and it is probable that this is the meaning of 'temperate,' applied to the women.

[1] *Deaconesses*, 57*f*.

Finally, both are to be trustworthy; the men are not to be 'greedy of filthy lucre,' or rather 'eager for base gain,' and the women are to be 'faithful in all things.' This suggests that church monies would pass through their hands in connexion with the relief of the poor which was one of the most important functions of the diaconate.

XXVI.

Assuming that the women saluted in Romans xvi. were members of the church of Ephesus, and excluding Prisca, who may not have been converted until her acquaintance with St. Paul at Corinth, it would seem that only one Christian woman of Rome is mentioned in the New Testament. Her name occurs in the following message at the close of the Second Epistle to Timothy:

2 Tim. iv. 21 'Eubulus saluteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.'

Most of those scholars, who find it difficult to suppose that the Pastoral Epistles, as they have come down to us, are the work of St. Paul, are agreed that a certain amount of genuine Pauline material has been embodied in them; and among the passages which are believed to have been written by the apostle is the section in Second Timothy iv containing personal references, in which these greetings are found. But whether we accept this conjecture or prefer the traditional view, we shall place Claudia at Rome. In the former case we shall suppose that the greetings belong to a letter

written by St. Paul during the imprisonment recorded in the Acts which terminated in his death ; in the latter case we shall date them with the whole epistle during his 'second' captivity.

Claudia's name suggests a connexion with the imperial household. It is not impossible that she was a member of the Claudian *gens* ; but it is more probable that she was a freedwoman. In the *Apostolic Constitutions* she is regarded as the mother of Linus ; but, as Archbishop Bernard remarks, 'it is probable that this is a mere guess resting on the juxtaposition of their names in this verse.'[1]

On the supposition that Claudia must have been the wife of one of the men mentioned along with her, Pudens and she have been identified with Claudius Pudens and Claudia Quinctilla, whose inscription to the memory of an infant child has been found on the road between Rome and Ostia. Another theory supposes her to have been the Claudia Rufina, a British girl, and wife of Aulus Pudens, the dissolute friend of the poet Martial. This Claudia has again been identified with the daughter of a British chief named Cogidubnus, with whose sanction, according to an inscription found in 1722, a certain Pudens built a temple at Chichester. But there is no evidence for any of these suggestions ; and the fact that the name of Linus comes between the names of Pudens and Claudia makes it almost impossible that they should have been husband and wife.

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[1] *Pastoral Epistles, ad loc.*

There is indeed no reason to seek for any further relationship between these persons than the spiritual relationship involved in membership in the Church. Whether Linus is to be identified with the bishop of the same name or not, it is clear that the three men and Claudia have been singled out from among 'all the brethren' as prominent members of the Christian community at Rome. Possibly they were heads of congregations which met for worship at their houses.

Outside the New Testament there is evidence for the prominence of women in the church of Rome at an early date. When the historian Tacitus tells us that 'an immense multitude' of Christians suffered death in the persecution under Nero in A.D. 64-5,[1] we should naturally suppose that this number included many women; but we are not without direct testimony. In the Epistle of St. Clement of Rome to the Corinthian church the following passage occurs: 'Through jealousy women were persecuted as Danaids and Dircæ, suffering horrible and unholy outrages; they attained to the sure course of faith and received a noble reward, although they were weak in body.'[2] There can be no doubt that this is a reference to the same persecution as that which Tacitus describes.

The meaning of 'Danaids' and 'Dircæ' has been much discussed. The Danaids in Greek mythology were the fifty daughters of Danaus, who at the instigation of their father slew their bridegrooms and were compelled as a punishment in

[1] *Annales*, xv. 44. [2] c. vi.

the under-world to draw water for ever in vessels pierced with holes. Dirce, the wife of Lycus, was punished for her cruelty to her husband's divorced wife by being tied to a bull which dragged her about till she died. It has been supposed that St. Clement means that the Christian women of Rome were made to represent these women in a theatrical entertainment and that the torture inflicted upon them took similar forms. Dr. Plummer has recently made another suggestion. He points out that the poet Pindar records the story of how Danaus secured second husbands for his daughters by placing them all at the end of a race-course to be won as prizes by runners. He thinks that there may be a reference to this in the words 'attained to the sure course and received a noble reward.' 'Is it not possible,' he asks 'that, in a similar way, Christian women and girls were exposed in the amphitheatre to be run for by the ruffians at Rome?'[1] It may be added that in the opinion of some scholars the text of this passage in St. Clement's Epistle is corrupt and may be emended by substituting 'maidens, slave-girls,' for 'Danaids and Dircæ.'[2]

It is at all events clear that the writer wishes us to understand that women were not spared in the persecution and that they were not lacking in courage and endurance. The natural inference is that women were numerous and held an important place in the church at Rome in the apostolic age.

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[1] *Expository Times*, xxvi. 560*ff.*

[2] Wordsworth, *Conjectural Emendations*, 18.

XXVII.

It is possible that there may be another reference in the New Testament to a woman who was the head of a ' house-church.'

2 John 1 *ff* The Second Epistle of St. John is addressed to ' the elect lady and her children ' ; and the purpose of the letter is to warn them against ' deceivers ' who may visit them,—false teachers who deny the reality of the Incarnation, who ' confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh.' Itinerant preachers are referred to again in the Third

3 John 5 *ff* Epistle ; and the situation presupposed in both letters is that which is found in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Apostles, in the wider sense of the term, and prophets travelled about ministering to the local congregations ; and the houses in which they were entertained were often the meeting-places of the communities. It is not, therefore, discrimination in the exercise of hospitality which is chiefly enjoined in the Epistle ; the meaning of the warning is rather that heretical missionaries are to be given no opportunity of addressing the congregation and of unsettling the faith of the Christians. Only those who bring ' the teaching of Christ ' are to be recognized and welcomed : ' if any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting : for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.'

Two views are held with regard to the destination of this Epistle. Many commentators under-

stand 'the elect lady' to be a figurative expression for a church of which the 'children' are the members. Others understand the language to mean a Christian woman and her family. Dr. Brooke, who thinks that 'the general character of the Epistle is almost decisive against the view that it is addressed to an individual,' and says that 'the subjects with which it deals are such as affect a community rather than an individual or a family,' adds the remark that 'much of its contents might be regarded as advice needed by the leading member of a church on whom the duty mainly fell of entertaining the strangers who visited it.'[1] There would seem to be no reason, therefore, why we should not combine the two views and conclude that the Epistle was addressed to a congregation which had a woman at its head, a 'house-church' in fact, like that of Nympha at Laodicea. Why should not the 'children' be the spiritual children of 'the elect lady,' and she another 'mother' of an infant community? On this assumption the difficulty with regard to the interchange of singular and plural in the second person disappears; the fact that only some of the 'children' can be commended in verse 4 is quite intelligible; and the greeting at the close of the Epistle is also explained; 'the children of thine elect sister salute thee,' the reference being to another woman's 'house-church' from which 'the elder' was writing. [2 John 13]

Some of those scholars who suppose that the

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[1] *Johannine Epistles*, 168.

Epistle was addressed to an individual woman have imagined that one or other of the terms translated ' elect ' and ' lady ' is her name. In the former case the name would be Electa ; and Clement of Alexandria may be quoted in favour of this suggestion.[1] But the name is unknown; and the phrase ' thine elect sister ' in the greeting to which we have alluded is almost fatal to the conjecture. It is less unlikely that ' lady ' may represent the proper name Kyria (Cyria, in the margin of the American edition of the Revised Version). This name is said to have been common at the time. But if ' Kyria the elect ' had been the translation, we should have expected the article in the Greek ; its absence makes it improbable that this is what was meant. On the whole therefore it is best to assume that the woman is unnamed. ' Lady,' repeated in verse 5, may be a term of endearment, as Dr. Rendel Harris thinks ;[2] but it is more likely that it is a title of courtesy. Its use can be illustrated from papyrus letters. A parallel to ' elect,' as applied to an individual Christian, is to be found in the description of Rufus in Romans xvi. 13, and also in 1 Peter v. 13, if the reference here is to St. Peter's wife.

An attempt has been made by Dr. Rendel Harris to glean some further information about ' the elect lady ' from the Epistle. He has noticed that in verse 8 the language is similar to

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1 *Adumbrationes*, iv. 437.
2 *Expositor*, vi. iii. 194*ff*.

Ruth ii. 12 ; in both there is mention of ' work ' and of ' full reward.' Dr. Harris deduces from this possible quotation that the woman to whom the Epistle is addressed was ' a second Ruth,' that as Ruth was a foreigner in Israel so ' the elect lady ' had come into the fellowship of the Church from without and was a Gentile Christian.[1] It cannot be said that the suggestion is convincing.

It may be added that we have nothing to help us in determining the locality of this ' house-church,' beyond the universal tradition which connects the three Epistles of St. John with Ephesus, or at least with Asia Minor.

XXVIII.

Our review of the information which is contained in the New Testament with regard to the position and influence of Christian women in the apostolic age has now been brought to a close. The main conclusions to which it points have been suggested in the course of our study. It will be convenient however briefly to summarize them here.

While it cannot without exaggeration be said that early Christianity was primarily a women's movement, there is no doubt that women formed a considerable part of the membership of the

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[1] *loc. cit.*

Church from the first. When we consider that in some quarters the attraction of Christianity for women was a matter of reproach, and when we remember the later prejudice against the prominence of women in the Church, the amount of evidence to this effect which is available in our sources is the more remarkable.

The ' many ' women who had been attached to our Lord as ' disciples ' were included in the original nucleus of the Christian society ; and we have seen that in Palestine, in Syria, in Asia Minor, in Greece, and in Rome—in fact in every district concerning which a record of the extension of the Church has been preserved—women were among the first to respond to the preaching of the Gospel. At least at one centre, Philippi, the Christian congregation originated with women ; and there is much direct and indirect testimony in the New Testament to the fact that elsewhere there was a large proportion of women among the early converts. It is now recognized that the majority of Christians in the first century were drawn from the class of persons known as ' God-fearers,' *i.e.* Gentile adherents of Judaism, and that many women were in the ranks of these ' honorary members ' of the synagogues. The secession of a large number of ' God-fearing ' women would account for the undoubtedly strong feminine element in the primitive Church.

The successful appeal of Christianity to women is a feature of the apostolic age which deserves greater attention from the student of the period than it has commonly received. In this respect

the Church stands in striking contrast to Mithraism, its most formidable rival. To the strict exclusion of women from its ceremonies the downfall of Mithraism may in great measure be attributed ; while the large number of women in the Church, and their participation in its life and work were important factors in the triumphant progress of Christianity.

Such a result however could not have been achieved, had not women been admitted on equal terms with men to the full privileges and responsibilities of Church membership ; and as a matter of fact there was no distinction of sex in the apostolic Church. Women shared in the initiatory and other rites and met with the men for common worship and instruction. Their complete equality is further indicated in the New Testament by the impartial use for men and women of the titles by which Christians were known to one another.

Above all, their rightful place in the Church was secured to women by the bestowal upon them in equal measure with men of those gifts of the Spirit over which the Church itself had no control. The women disciples were among the representatives of the Church to whom the commission of the risen Lord was given and to whom was imparted the Pentecostal endowment for service ; and throughout the apostolic age women received and exercised spiritual gifts for the benefit of their brethren. The most important of these gifts was that of prophecy or ' preaching ' ; and the incidental references in the New Testament, *viz.* the account of Philip's daughters at Cæsarea

and the directions of St. Paul with regard to the headdress of women who prophesied at Corinth, indicate that the prophetic ministry of women was a normal feature of Church life. That women at first were among the teachers also is evidenced by the later and reactionary prohibition in the First Epistle to Timothy. If the similar passage in First Corinthians does not refer merely to conversational interruptions, it may be cited as additional proof that in the earliest days women addressed the church assemblies. It is arbitrary to assume that these ministries were exercised by women only in private. The words 'private' and 'public' in this connexion are somewhat misleading; as it must be remembered that all the meetings of the Christians took place in private houses.

It was indeed the domestic and entirely informal character of the organization of the primitive communities which gave the women a special opportunity for usefulness. Abundant evidence is met with in the New Testament that women were often among the 'firstfruits,' or first converts of the missions, who, like the members of the household of Stephanas at Corinth, 'set themselves to minister to the saints' and whose voluntary aid in the establishment of the churches was accepted by the apostle. Every kind of service was called a 'ministry'; and at first the most necessary 'ministry' was the provision of a house in which the missionaries could be entertained and which could accommodate the congregation when it assembled for worship and

edification. It was frequently a woman of means who was able and willing to meet the need. Some married women like Prisca co-operated with their husbands in placing their houses at the disposal of the communities; others who rendered a similar service like Mary the mother of John Mark at Jerusalem, and Lydia at Philippi may be presumed to have been widows and therefore in a position of greater freedom and independence than any other women at the time. These women we have called heads of 'house-churches'; and the term would seem to be justified by the allusions to them in the Acts and Epistles. Their houses became the centres of the life of the churches. By them was dispensed the hospitality to strangers which in the apostolic age was a characteristic expression of the 'brotherly love' of Christians. Through them also was administered the relief of the poorer members of the church; and in their hands was the care of the sick and afflicted. To use the term which St. Paul applies to Phoebe, they were the 'patronesses' of the communities—the 'nursing mothers' of the infant churches. Here was a status, unofficial indeed, but recognized alike by the apostle and by the brethren at a time when leadership in the Church, whether that of women or of men, was based only upon willingness and ability to 'serve.'

Moreover, Prisca and other women took a direct part in apostolic or missionary work, and were among those to whom St. Paul refers as his 'fellow-workers.' Euodia and Syntyche at Philippi are definitely claimed by him in striking

language as his fellow-evangelists; and the semi-technical term which he applies to certain of the women saluted in Romans xvi. implies that they too had undertaken evangelistic labours in connexion with the founding of the church to which they belonged. The expressions used in both these cases are among the most forcible which the apostle has employed to describe the activities of missionaries. They indicate the notable character of the women's work and the high value which St. Paul set upon their co-operation. If we are to understand from the First Epistle to Timothy that at a later stage, when informal and spontaneous ministries had given place to fixed offices, the work of women in the Church was restricted to that of the official widows and the deaconesses, this would suggest a reaction from a condition of things in which women had enjoyed greater liberty and wider opportunities for service. At the same time it is clear that women had won for themselves a place in the official ministry which had now been organized; and the status of deacons, men or women, was inferior only to that of the elder-bishops or overseers.

The practical consequences of the equality of the sexes in the spiritual sphere were not at once apparent in social and domestic life. The fear of implicating Christianity in a charge of revolutionary tendencies discouraged an immediate application of principles to which the Church was undoubtedly committed. But a religion whose privileges and obligations were shared by men

and women without distinction was bound from the first to modify existing ideas and customs which were irreconcilable with this equality. Wherever more enlightened views prevailed, as in Asia Minor and in Macedonia, Christianity appropriated these as in accordance with its spirit, and utilized for the furtherance of its cause the position of greater liberty and influence which was accorded to women. The progress which had been made before the close of the apostolic age may be measured by the examples which are given in the New Testament of the co-operation of married couples in the service of the Church.

The inconsistency which we have noticed in St. Paul's treatment of the subject of marriage may be attributed partly to a prudent conservatism and partly to the belief, fostered by his rabbinical training, that for the conventional notions with regard to the subordination of women there was the highest sanction. His teaching however, while it cannot be regarded as final, was far in advance of many contemporary conceptions and practices, and where it was accepted cannot have failed to effect an improvement in the social status of women. Moreover, in any estimate of the apostle's position in regard to this matter there must be taken into account his actual relations with the women who were closely associated with him in his work and whose services he gratefully acknowledges.

We began our study with a consideration of the attitude to women adopted by our Lord. We saw that His treatment of women implied a

recognition of their personality as of equal value with that of men. Not only were women admitted to His instruction, but some of His deepest teaching was given to individual women. To the women whose personal service He accepted, He accorded a place of honour among His immediate followers. To women disciples as to men disciples He entrusted the carrying out of His work.

Of this attitude the number of women in the apostolic Church, the position occupied by women, and the influence which they were able to exert, must be regarded as a direct result. At times indeed prejudice and the force of established customs retarded the interpretation of the Master's example and the accomplishment of His will. But in the period covered by the New Testament writings we can trace the first attempts of Christians to translate principles into practice; and the presence in the Church of the divine Spirit whose patience is as great as His power, was a guarantee of the ultimate triumph of the ideal.

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